

THE LIBERTY "BOYS OF '76"

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

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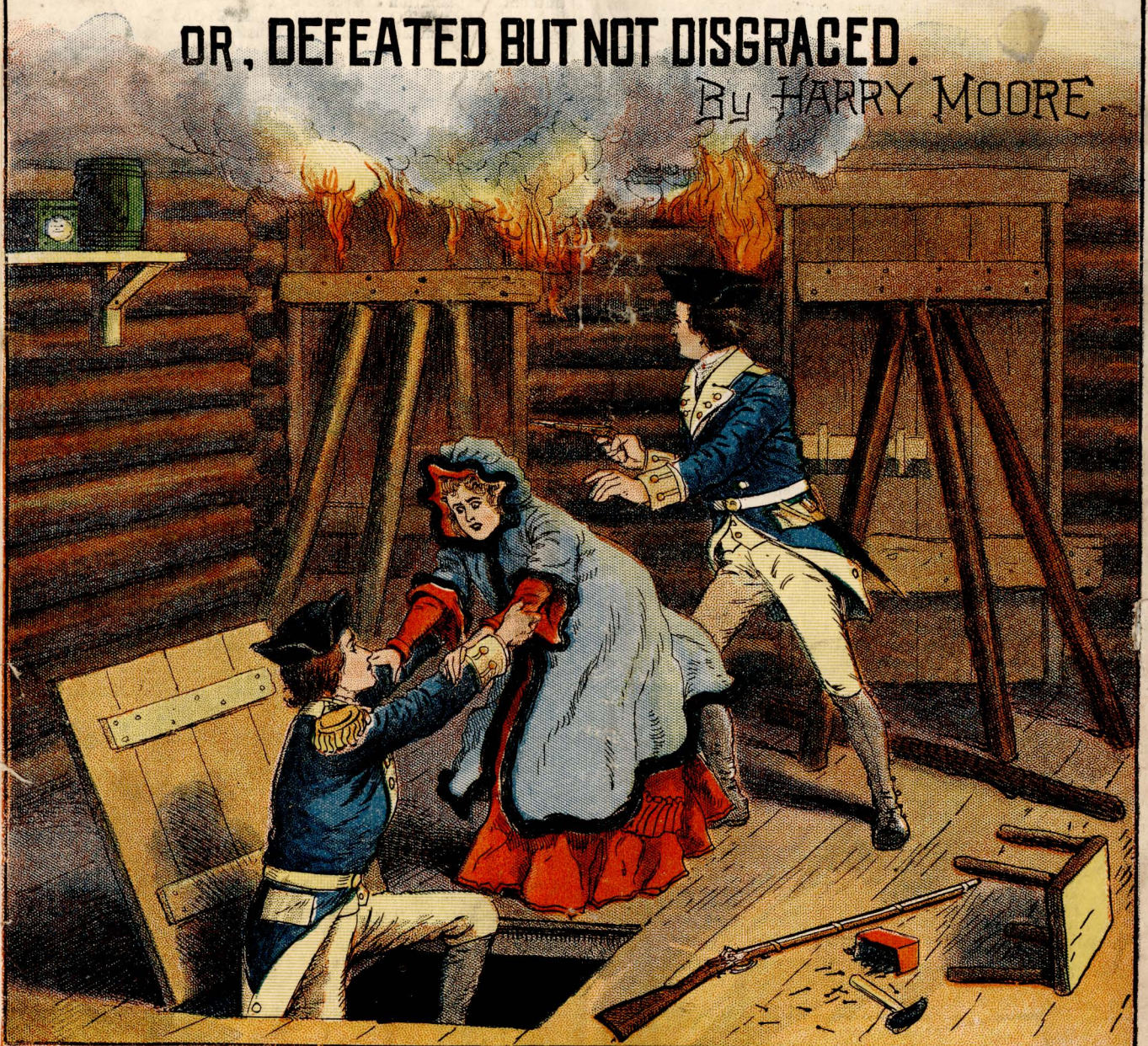
NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 29, 1901.

Price 5 Cents.

THE LIBERTY BOYS' SETBACK;

OR, DEFEATED BUT NOT DISGRACED.

BY HARRY MOORE



"Come," said Dick to the startled girl, "do not be afraid. We will escape from them yet." Then he lifted the girl down through the trap-door, while Bob, pistol in hand, watched the door.

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NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 29, 1901.

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CHAPTER I.

A SHREWD DEVICE.

It was the 18th of April, 1781.

On this day the patriot army of the South, under General Greene, appeared before Camden, South Carolina.

Camden was occupied by about one thousand British troops under Lord Rawdon.

Greene wished to capture Camden, but hardly dared attack, as he knew nothing of the defenses of the place.

He had more than two thousand men, but many of them were militia, and he well knew that an attacking force must outnumber the other in order to have much chance of success.

Greene sent for Dick Slater, the young captain of the band of youths known as "The Liberty Boys of '76."

Dick had been a wonderful success as a spy.

He had done successful work for General Washington in the North, and also for Greene in the South.

When Dick reported to Greene, the latter told him what he wished.

Dick listened, and when the other had ended, he said: "Then you wish me to learn, if possible, how strong the defenses of the British are?"

"That is just what I wish you to do, Dick."

"Very well, sir; I will see what I can do."

"Do so; and report to me the instant you succeed in learning what I wish to know."

"Very well."

Dick withdrew and returned to the quarters occupied by the "Liberty Boys."

Dick had turned the matter over in his mind.

He knew that the British knew the patriot army was in the vicinity.

Indeed, the patriot army was within half a mile of the town, and was plain to be seen by the redcoats, without a doubt.

What was worrying Dick, therefore, was how to enter Camden.

He would be discovered, without doubt, and shot or hung for a spy.

He might, by waiting till away in the night, sneak in, but he would be taking big chances.

Dick pondered the matter carefully, and came to a decision.

He was a youth who believed in bold measures.

When he reached the quarters occupied by the "Liberty Boys," he called the youths about him.

"Boys," he said, "General Greene wishes me to enter Camden and find out how strong the fortifications are. I have made up my mind to enter at once, and I want you to help me."

"What can we do, Dick?" asked Bob Estabrook.

"I'll tell you, Bob."

He did so, and when he had finished the youths nodded their approval of Dick's plan, and began making preparations to render Dick all the assistance in their power.

Dick quickly doffed his uniform and donned an old suit of homespun, with coarse shoes and an old slouch hat.

Then he bridled and saddled an old, shaggy-looking horse, and mounted it.

The other "Liberty Boys" had bridled and saddled their horses, and they also mounted.

Then suddenly Dick rode out of the encampment at a gallop.

He was kicking the horse in the ribs, and doing his best to get speed out of the animal, and when he had gone perhaps a hundred yards, out from the encampment burst a score or more of the "Liberty Boys," and gave chase.

They fired their muskets and pistols, and shouted for the fugitive to stop.

But Dick rode onward at the best speed of his horse.

He took off his old hat and used it as a whip to urge the horse onward.

The redcoats, standing on the breastworks, saw the chase, and stared in amazement.

"The fellow must be a deserter!" they cried.

"Yes, that's what he is!"

"See; they're firing upon him!"

"He'll never make it!"

The redcoats were excited.

When Dick was within hearing of the sound of their voices they yelled to him, encouragingly.

A hundred of the soldiers mounted the earthworks, muskets in hand, and waited for the pursuers of the lone rider to come within range.

But the "Liberty Boys" were too shrewd to follow Dick till he was within range.

Dick had warned them against following him too close.

The youth did not wish any of his brave boys to be killed by the British.

Dick kept on belaboring his horse with his old hat, and kicked and yelled at a great rate.

To an ordinary observer it looked as if he was nearly frightened to death.

The gate in the earthworks was opened for the fugitive, and Dick rode through, into the British encampment at a gallop.

As he brought his horse to a stop, and fell off, more than jumped, he gasped out, as if frightened nearly out of his wits:

"Hev I got erway frum 'em?"

CHAPTER II.

A SUSPICIOUS REDCOAT.

The British soldiers could not help laughing.

"Yes," they hastened to assure Dick, "you have got away from them."

They crowded around the youth, and eyed him curiously.

"Who are you?"

"What was the trouble?"

"How came you to leave the camp of the rebels?"

Dick had his story already "made up."

"W'y, ye see, et's this way," he said: "I live 'way up t'other side uv Cheraw. Dad, he's er loyal king's man, but w'en ther rebels kim through they kep' makin' ther young fellers jine ther army. Lots uv ther fellers wuz rebels an' glad ter jine, but I wuzn't, an' didn't wanter jine, but they made me do et. I made up my min' ter git erway frum 'em ther furst chance I got, an' w'en I heerd some uv 'em sayin' ez how ther British wuz heer in this heer town, I made up my min' ter make a break fur my liberty. I got onter my hoss an' struck out, an' them fellers chased me, an' thet's all ther is ter et."

"Then you're a deserter!" said one of the redcoats.

"I s'pose so."

"Yes, and if the rebels succeed in getting hold of you again they'll hang you, quick as a wink!"

Dick pretended to look frightened.

"But they musn't be let git me erg'in, mister!" he said in a trembling voice. "Kain't I stay heer with you uns mister?"

"I don't know; we'll have to see the commander, first."

"Say, I hope he'll let me stay! Ef he will, I'll fight fur ther king. I'm er loyal king's man, I am."

"We'll see what he says about it, directly. What is your name?"

"Dan Zink, mister."

"All right, Dan; come along with me."

Dick was conducted to a building, and into it.

It was the house occupied by Lord Rawdon as head-quarters.

The commander of the British was an effeminate-looking man, and although he looked at Dick closely, there was all of curiosity and naught of suspicion in his face.

"So you are a loyal king's man, and deserted from the rebels, my young friend?" he queried.

"Yes, mister," and Dick bowed, awkwardly.

Dick was a good actor, and as he had played the part of an ignorant country youth more than once, he knew how to do it now.

"And you wish to be allowed to join my army and fight for the king?"

"Yes, mister, ef ye'll let me."

"Very well, I grant you permission to do so. You will have to be careful, however, and not permit the rebels to capture you. If they should succeed in doing that, they would hang you, as deserters are always put to death instantly."

"I—I'll look out fur ther rebels, mister, an' not let 'em ketch me."

Then Dick left the room and the building.

"So far, so good!" thought Dick. "They haven't suspected that it is all a trick, and I think I shall be able to find out all I wish to know regarding the defenses of the place, and get away as soon as it is dark."

Dick was left to shift for himself, but found that he was the object of considerable attention from the redcoats.

A crowd was around him, wherever he went, and he made it a point to go pretty much everywnere.

He pretended like he moved around to try to get away from the crowd, and managed to get pretty much all over the town, and see all the defenses.

He observed everything carefully, and was impressed with the idea that it would be a difficult matter to storm the redcoats' position.

The defenses were strong.

Dick flattered himself that he had done his work so well that he had not excited the least tinge of suspicion in the mind of any one, but he was destined to be surprised.

He was walking along, gazing about him with a studied, gawky air, when a shrewd-eyed redcoat approached him, and, planting himself in front of Dick, said, in the coolest tone imaginable:

"Well, what do you think of them?"

Dick scented trouble, but did not show it in his face or air.

"Whut do I think uv whut?" he asked.

"The defenses. Do you think you and your rebel friends will be able to storm them?"

CHAPTER III.

EXCITEMENT IN THE REDCOAT CAMP.

This came as a surprise, indeed, to Dick.

He had not thought that any redcoat suspected him, yet here was one who evidently did.

But Dick did not let on.

He was altogether too old a hand to allow any man to get the advantage of him by means of taking him by surprise.

So he simply let his underjaw drop, and simulating wonder and surprise, shook his head.

"I dunno whut ye mean by thet," he said. "Whut air defenses, ennyway?"

Dick looked around him, into the faces of other redcoats as he spoke.

He deceived the majority—indeed, I may say that no one, save the one man, but what was deceived, and believed that Dick really did not know what the other meant by "defenses."

This one fellow, however, had been suspicious from the first, and his suspicions were not allayed by Dick's denial that he knew what defenses were.

"You may fool some with that statement," the redcoat said, "but you can't fool me. You are not what you pretend to be, at all! You are no deserter!"

"Whut's thet ye say!—thet I'm no deserter? W'y, didn't ye see et yerself?"

"I saw a farce, gotten up to deceive us!" was the dogged reply.

"Oh, come, Morrison, you're acting silly in this affair!"

one of the spectators said. "This young man is just what he claims to be; any one can see that."

"Of course!" from another.

"What ails you, anyway, Morrison?"

The redcoat addressed as Morrison kept his face, however.

He eyed his comrades with dogged determination in his eyes.

It was plain that he did not intend to be laughed out of his views.

"You may say what you please, fellows," he said, "but this young fellow is a spy, and he has come here to see how strong our defenses are, with the intention of taking the information back to the rebel camp."

"Bosh!"

"Oh, pshaw!"

"You're foolish, Morrison!"

"Such a statement as that is folly!"

"Uv course et is," said Dick; "ther feller is wrong. I hain't no rebel, an' ef I wuz ter go back ter the rebel camp I'd wish I hedn't!"

"That's right; you would, for a fact!"

Morrison's comrades all were against him, so he turned away; but he was muttering in an angry manner as he went.

"That fellow will get me into trouble before I get out of this encampment, if I don't look out," thought Dick.

He made up his mind to keep his eyes on the fellow as much as was possible.

Dick kept his eyes open, too, for a chance to get out of the encampment and away before dark.

But no such opportunity presented itself.

There was always a crowd where he was, and it would have been impossible for him to get away.

He would have to wait till after dark.

Once night had settled down over all, he could make a bold dash with a good chance of getting away in safety.

Dick walked around till supper-time, and then was invited to eat by one of the redcoats who had been most friendly with him.

Dick always had a good appetite, and ate heartily, notwithstanding the fact that he was in the midst of enemies and was in great danger.

Should the redcoats learn that he really was a spy, they would make short work of him.

He had just finished eating, and arisen from his seat, when there was a commotion close at hand, and then the suspicious redcoat, Morrison, with half a dozen comrades at his heels, came rushing up.

They were all greatly excited, and when their eyes fell on Dick, they pointed at him and cried:

"There he is! There's the rebel spy, Dick Slater!"

CHAPTER IV.

A BREAK FOR LIBERTY.

"Whut d'ye mean?" cried Dick.

He felt that the time had come for him to make a break for his liberty, and he cast quick glances about him, seeking for the best avenue of escape.

"What do we mean?" cried Morrison, his voice ringing out in triumph. "Why, we mean that the British soldiers whom you captured at Cheraw have escaped, and are here! They brought the information that you are Dick Slater, and that your coming into our lines to-day, the way you did, was a shrewd scheme to enable you to see how strong our defenses are!"

"Is this really true?" cried several of the redcoats with whom Dick had just been eating supper.

It seemed to them to be impossible.

"It is the truth, and nothing but the truth," said Morrison; and then to Dick he cried:

"Surrender!"

"Never!" the youth replied.

He leaped forward.

Morrison and his comrades did not have weapons in their hands.

Doubtless they thought there was no necessity for it.

They could not think that the "rebel" would dare offer resistance.

Their idea was that he would surrender instantly.

Which proved that, while they knew Dick was Dick Slater, the "Champion Spy of the Revolution," they really had no idea of what sort of a youth he was.

They judged him by the ordinary standard.

And there was nothing ordinary about Dick.

He was an extraordinary youth, and the redcoats were soon to learn that such was the case.

Dick's leap was like that of a panther.

When he struck the ground he was within reaching distance of Morrison.

Out shot Dick's fist.

Crack!

It took Morrison fair between the eyes.

It was a terrific stroke.

Down went the redcoat, with a thump.

Then out shot first the right, then the left fist, and down went two more redcoats.

Then Dick bounded away toward the earthworks at the point nearest where he had had the encounter.

The redcoats suddenly awoke now.

They leaped to their feet.

They started in pursuit, and yelled to their comrades nearer than they to stop Dick.

Easier said than done.

Dick was a swift runner.

He was at the earthworks in a jiffy.

Near the point where he reached the works there was a sentinel.

The sentinel saw him coming, and leveled his musket.

"Give it to him!" called a score of the redcoats. "Shoot!"

The redcoat sentinel obeyed.

Crack!

Dick seemed to stumble and fall, just as the sentinel fired.

Dick had done this purposely to disconcert the aim of the fellow, and cause him to miss.

The redcoats thought their comrade had brought the spy down, however, and they set up a yell of triumph.

It was premature.

Up leaped the supposed dead youth, and forward he bounded.

The sentinel was perhaps the most astonished man of any.

He had thought that he had brought down his man.

He attempted to draw a pistol.

Before he could get the weapon out, Dick was upon him.

Out shot the youth's fist.

It landed fair between the sentinel's eyes.

He was knocked head over heels, down the side of the earthworks.

After him plunged Dick, going out of sight of the redcoats like a flash, but as he did so a volley rang out.

CHAPTER V.

INTO THE PIT.

A dozen bullets whistled past Dick's head.

The majority went above his head.

One hit his hat and knocked it off.

Dick reached the ground at the foot of the earthworks at almost the same instant the sentinel reached there.

The man was stunned.

Dick had struck him a terrible blow.

The youth stooped and jerked the two pistols out of the fellow's belt.

Then he rushed away in the direction of the patriot encampment, just as the redcoats came swarming up on the top of the earthworks.

They caught a glimpse of the fleeing youth, and uttered a wild yell of rage.

They fired another volley.

It was fired at random, of course, but several of the bullets came dangerously near Dick.

Then the redcoats rushed down the side of the embankment and started in pursuit of the fugitive.

Dick had a very good start, and thought that he would be able to escape.

He was an exceedingly swift runner.

More, he was a good woodsman, while his pursuers were not.

This made it easier for Dick to get through among the trees than for his pursuers to do it.

Another thing: It was only half a mile to the patriot encampment, and Dick felt that he could keep ahead of his pursuers till the camp was reached.

Onward dashed Dick, and after him came the redcoats.

The latter were infuriated by the thought that they had been deceived by a hated "rebel."

They panted for an opportunity to get their hands on him.

They wanted revenge.

Especially was this the case with Morrison.

He was a member of the pursuing party, and as he ran he muttered anathemas to himself on the head of the youth who had dealt him the blow between the eyes.

Dick dashed onward, and was just beginning to congratulate himself on making his escape easily when the earth suddenly seemed to give way underneath his feet, and he went plunging downward.

He fell a distance of a dozen feet at least.

Dick had been going with such speed that he was jarred considerably by the fall—indeed, was almost dazed for the moment.

He quickly recovered, however, and springing to his feet, felt all around him.

By moving about, and feeling with his hands, the youth soon discovered that he was in a square pit about ten feet each way, and, as we have said, at least a dozen feet deep.

Dick had no time to wonder what the pit was, or why it had been made.

The redcoats were close at hand, and some of them would in all probability fall into the pit.

He must be ready to take care of them, if they did.

He heard the rushing footsteps of his pursuers.

He stood erect, near the wall, and with every nerve at its full tension, waited.

The footsteps went past, however.

No one tumbled into the pit.

The redcoats had missed it.

"Well, they were luckier than I," thought Dick.

Suddenly the sound of musketry, followed by rapid pistol firing came to the youth's hearing.

It came from the direction of the patriot encampment.

"The redcoats who were chasing me have run into our picket-line," thought Dick; "and a little scrimmage is on. Jove! I hope our boys will give the rascals a good warming!"

Rattle, rattle, rattle!

Crack, crack, crack!

It was the rattle of muskets and the crack of pistols.

The fusillade was lively while it lasted, but it lasted only a few moments.

It ceased as suddenly as it had begun, and on the heels of the silence came cheer after cheer.

Dick knew that cheer instantly.

He would have recognized it anywhere.

It was the victorious cheer of the "Liberty Boys."

"It was the boys whom the redcoats ran up against!" thought Dick. "And the British got the worst of it, too! I'm glad of that."

Dick listened intently.

Suddenly he heard the sound of footsteps.

Patter, patter, patter!

Closer and closer they came.

Dick could hear the sound of the running feet, to the right and to the left.

Then suddenly the sound of footsteps was heard right at the edge of the pit.

There was a startled cry, and a dark form came plunging down into the pit.

CHAPTER VI.

THE "LIBERTY BOYS" ON HAND.

It was one of the redcoats, and he alighted almost at Dick's feet.

Dick did not know it at the time, as it was too dark to distinguish features, but the redcoat was Morrison, the man who had been suspicious of him when he was in the British encampment.

Dick threw himself upon the redcoat before he could recover and arise.

The youth seized the man by the throat, and squeezed.

His object was to prevent the fellow from calling to his comrades for help.

Should he do so, and they came to his assistance, it would go hard with Dark.

He would be captured and taken back to the British encampment.

This, of course, Dick did not wish to happen.

He was not in much danger, however.

He had the other at a great disadvantage.

The redcoat had been somewhat dazed by his fall, and now Dick had compressed his throat so that he could not call out.

The other redcoats were looking out for themselves, and each one expected the others to do as he was doing.

Dick, however, did not feel like taking any chances, and he kept up the pressure on the man's throat till he was sure the fellow was unconscious.

Then he let go and began trying to figure on some way of escaping from the pit.

Dick moved all around his cramped quarters, and searched carefully for something which would be of assistance to him in getting out of the place, but could find nothing.

He had just given up in despair when he heard the sound of footsteps.

Some one was coming, but who?

Was he, or they, if more than one, a friend or friends?

Dick could not as yet make up his mind regarding the matter.

He listened intently.

He suddenly discovered that the sound of the footsteps came from the direction of the patriot encampment.

This gave him a thrill of pleasure.

"It must be one of our men," thought Dick; "perhaps there may be several of them."

He listened intently.

"Yes, there is more than one," he said to himself.

Soon he heard the sound of low, cautious voices.

He listened eagerly.

Low as were the tones, he thought he recognized them.

The owners of the voices were "Liberty Boys!"

Dick was sure of this—so sure indeed that he called out:

"Hello, there! Is that you, boys?"

There were excited exclamations, and a rush of feet.

"Is that you, Dick?" called out the familiar voice of Bob Estabrook.

Yes, it is I."

"Where are you?"

The footsteps were close at hand.

"Right here; down in a pit. Be careful or you will fall in and break your neck!"

"Down in a pit!"

"Great guns!"

"How came you down there, old man?"

"Fell down," replied Dick. Then he added:

"A couple of you reach down your hands. I have a prisoner down here, and will pass him up to you."

"A prisoner?"

"Yes; a redcoat. He tumbled down here on top of me, and I choked him. Are you ready?"

"Ready, Dick."

Dick lifted the form of the insensible redcoat, and passed him up so that his comrades could get hold.

"There you are," Dick said; "can you lift him?"

"Easily, Dick."

A few moments later, they asked:

"Are you ready to come up, old man?"

"Yes," the youth replied.

Half a minute later he was out of the pit, standing on the level ground beside his comrades, of whom there were four.

They explained that they had suspected that the redcoats had been chasing him, and had come out to look for him.

"Well, I'm glad you did."

"So are we."

"Lift the redcoat and bring him along," ordered Dick; "let us be getting back to camp. I have some important information for General Greene."

At this instant the sound of rushing feet was heard.

The sound came from the direction of the British encampment.

"Quick, men, and we will rescue Morrison and capture some of the rebels as well!" cried a voice.

The redcoats were at hand!

CHAPTER VII.

FORT WATSON.

"Quick!" cried Dick, in a low, excited voice. "Two of you carry the redcoat, the rest of us will stand the redcoats off."

Two of the "Liberty Boys" seized hold of the insensible man and half carried, half dragged him in the direction of the patriot encampment.

Crack! crack! crack!

The redcoats were firing.

The bullets whistled in uncomfortable proximity to Dick and his comrades.

One of the boys who was carrying the wounded redcoat gave utterance to a cry of pain.

"Are you hit, Sam?" asked Dick, in an alarmed voice.

"Yes, Dick."

"Are you hurt bad?"

"Oh, I can get along, I guess, but I can't help carry this fellow."

"Drop him, then; we'll have to give up trying to make him a prisoner, I guess. Retreat slowly toward the camp and fire as you go."

The youths obeyed.

Slowly and stubbornly, with their faces toward the foe, the youths retreated.

They fired several volleys from their pistols and had the satisfaction of hearing two or three of the redcoats give utterance to cries of pain.

Dick knew by the number of shots which had been fired that there must be a score or more of the redcoats.

Had there not been so many, he would not have retreated, but would have stood his ground and fought it out to a finish.

As it was, he thought it better to retreat.

They soon reached the patriot encampment and went to their quarters.

Dick took time enough to examine Sam Sanderson's wound, and noted that it was, while a painful wound, not a serious one.

He left Sam to the care of the other boys and hastened to General Greene's tent to make his report.

The general listened to Dick's report with interest.

"So you think there is no chance for us to storm the redcoats' position, Dick?" the general asked when Dick had finished.

"I think not, General Greene; their defenses are too strong; I am afraid it would result very disastrously if we were to attempt it."

"Well, as I have absolute confidence in your judgment, I shall retire to a safe position in the morning and then try and think up some way of getting at the enemy, with a fair chance of success attending our efforts."

After some further talk, Dick withdrew.

Immediately after breakfast next morning the patriot army broke camp and marched two miles northeastward to Hobkirk's Hill.

Here the army went into camp.

The hill was a high one and Greene felt confident that

he could hold it against any attempt which the British might make to dislodge him.

About one o'clock General Greene sent for Dick.

The youth lost no time in reporting at the general's tent.

"Dick," said General Greene, "I have decided to send a force, under Marion and Lee, to capture Fort Watson, which is, as you know, about half way between here and Charleston. There will probably be some lively fighting, and I thought that perhaps you and your 'Liberty Boys' would like to accompany the expedition. We shall remain here with the main army and keep Lord Rawdon's attention drawn in this direction so as to keep him from sending assistance to the fort."

"I shall be glad to go with Marion and Lee," said Dick, promptly; "and I know the boys will all be delighted. When will the expedition start?"

"Within the hour; the men will make a wide detour so as to get around Camden without being seen and I think you will be able to reach Fort Watson some time tomorrow."

"When Dick left General Greene's tent he saw Marion's and Lee's men getting ready for the start.

He hastened to the quarters occupied by the "Liberty Boys" and soon had the youths making hasty preparations for the trip.

Three-quarters of an hour later, Marion's and Lee's forces and the "Liberty Boys" left the patriot encampment.

They went directly east a distance of three miles.

Then they turned south and had no difficulty in getting past Camden without being seen.

They camped that night in the timber bordering the Catawba River.

Next morning the march was resumed and kept up till about three o'clock in the afternoon, when they arrived in front of Fort Watson.

Fort Watson stood on an Indian mound which rose to a height of forty feet above the surrounding country, which was the lowland of the Santee River bottoms.

The patriot soldiers paused just beyond rifle shot distance and looked at the fort and then around them.

Lee turned and looked at General Marion.

"This is going to be no easy task, Marion," he said.

"You are right," was the reply; "the advantage is all on their side. I understand they have close to a hundred and fifty men in there, and with the advantage of position which they have, they should be able to keep a small army at bay."

"Yes, there is no doubt about that; we have nearly three hundred men, but it would be folly to try to storm the fort."

"Yes, indeed; we must think of some other way."

"If we only had a hill," said Lee, regretfully; "if we had a Mount Defiance so that we could turn the fort into a British Ticonderoga, we would be all right."

"Let's make a hill," said Major Mayhan, one of Marion's officers.

"Make a hill!" exclaimed Marion. "What do you mean?" Mayhan explained.

He was a quiet fellow, with but little to say, usually, and he made his explanation brief.

When he had finished, Marion and Lee slapped their thighs and nodded their heads.

"It will work!" declared Marion.

"The very thing!" exclaimed Lee.

CHAPTER VIII.

DICK AND BOB MAKE A CAPTURE.

The plan which Mayhan had advanced was to build a wooden tower.

Near at hand was a thick forest of yellow pine, which was heavy and solid, almost, as oak.

This would furnish splendid material for the tower.

Before giving the order to go to work, however, Marion sent a man with a white cloth, and called upon the British to surrender.

They refused.

"I knew they would," said Marion, "but I wished to do the right thing and give them a chance to escape damage."

He and Lee conferred together.

They thought it possible that they might starve the British out, and thus save the men the work of cutting the logs, hundreds of which would be necessary to make a tower such as would have to be built.

They decided that this could not be done, however.

It was evident that the garrison in the fort had plenty of provisions, for there were numerous barrels and boxes even on the outside of the fort.

They had so much in the way of supplies that they did not have room for it inside the walls.

"I wonder what is in those boxes and barrels, anyway?" remarked Bob Estabrook.

"I don't know," replied Dick; "but to-night we will try and find out."

Dick spoke significantly, and the faces of the "Liberty Boys" lighted up, for they scented an adventure.

Marion and Lee gave the order for the men to retire into the timber.

There he told them what he intended to do.

The men answered with cheers.

They had plenty of tools with which to work.

They had axes, saws, chisels and adzes, and the men went to work with a will.

Of course, there were not a sufficient number of tools so that all might work at the same time, but they took turns at it, and all worked hard while they were at it.

A number of the soldiers were placed on guard over the fort.

It was watched from all sides, as Marion thought it possible the British might evacuate, and he wished to capture them if they attempted it.

Dick, Bob and several more of the "Liberty Boys" were given the privilege of scouting and spying about, doing about as they liked.

Dick and Bob wandered away, and were down by the river, lying under the trees, when suddenly Bob clutched Dick by the arm.

"Here comes a British soldier!" he whispered. "He has a bucket, and is coming for water."

Dick looked and saw that Bob was right.

He glanced about him and saw that there was a path leading down to the river.

The soldier would come along this path.

Indeed, Dick knew the path had been worn by British soldiers in coming and going to and from the river for water.

"Wait till he passes and then we will leap upon him, Bob," whispered Dick.

The soldier came along, cautiously.

He was keeping a close lookout, through the trees, but was looking in the other direction from the side on which Dick and Bob were.

The chopping sounded in the direction in which he was looking, and he was doubtless wondering what the "rebels" were doing.

This was proven when he drew near the youths, for they heard him say:

"Now, I wonder what those blasted rebels are doing, anyway? Why are they chopping down trees? Are they going to build a fort, I wonder?"

He walked past where the youths crouched, still looking in the opposite direction.

Rising to their feet the youths leaped upon the redcoat. He gave utterance to a startled cry, and attempted to struggle.

He could do but little, however, against the two.

They speedily overpowered him, and tied his hands together behind his back.

Then they conducted him to General Marion.

"Aha! so you have captured one of them, eh?" the Swamp Fox exclaimed.

He asked the particulars.

"Then they have no water within the fort!" Marion cried, as soon as he learned the fellow had been caught going to the river for water. "All we have to do is to keep watch so that they can't get water, and they will have to surrender."

"You are mistaken," said the soldier; "the commander of the fort has said, often, that in case of a siege he could and would dig a well down to the level of the river, and would have plenty of water. That is what he will do, now that I have been captured."

"Humph!" said Marion. "I guess you are right."

Then he ordered the redcoat placed in confinement.

After supper that evening Dick went to General Marion and asked that he and the "Liberty Boys" be allowed to attempt to secure some of the surplus stores ranged along the walls of the fort on the outside.

"It will be dangerous, Dick," said Marion.

"Yes, but I think it worth while risking something to gain the stores."

"Yes, indeed. Well, go ahead; but be careful."

"Very well, sir."

Dick hastened back to his comrades with the information that the Swamp Fox had given his permission for them to make the attempt, and they began making their preparations at once.

When they were ready, they stole in the direction of the fort.

They approached it very carefully.

They were soon at the foot of the mound.

The mound was very steep, and it would be no easy matter to climb it, save at the point where a path led down.

As this path would undoubtedly be watched by the sentinels within the fort, the youths did not wish to make their way up it.

They waited a few minutes, and then began the ascent.

It was hard work climbing the steep ascent, and the progress made was slow.

Finally, however, they reached the top of the mound and stood beside the boxes and barrels standing alongside the wall of the fort.

Scarcely had they done so, when a dozen arms came out over the top of the fort.

In the hands were blazing torches, which lit up the scene in an alarming manner.

Then over the top of the wall came the muzzles of a score or more muskets, the muzzles of which frowned down upon the "Liberty Boys!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE HILL THAT GREW IN A NIGHT.

But the youths were not dismayed—nor, indeed, were they greatly surprised.

They had been ready for some such action on the part of the defenders of the fort, and acted with such promptitude as to turn the tables on them.

The instant the youths reached the top of the mound they had drawn their pistols, and now, quick as a flash, up went the arms of fifty youths.

Crack, crack, crack! Crash!—roar!

The "Liberty Boys" were all splendid snap shots with the pistol.

They had practiced a great deal, by Dick's advice, and had become proficient.

Their proficiency thus acquired stood them in good stead, now.

They were not more than twenty feet from the men upon whom they had fired, and the result of the shots was that the defenders of the fort were sadly demoralized.

A number were wounded, and the rest, while they fired, fired wildly, their shots coming nearer to damaging the main body of patriots, away down in the edge of the timber, than the youths at whom the shots were fired.

"Quick! give them another volley!" cried Dick.

The youths obeyed, and fired another volley, which had the effect of causing the defenders of the fort to withdraw from the ramparts.

The men with the torches also withdrew their arms, leaving all below in darkness.

This suited the "Liberty Boys," and they got to work at once.

They began rolling boxes and barrels down the side of the mound.

They kept at this and kept their eyes on the ramparts of the fort at the same time.

The redcoats displayed no more torches, but they tried a new plan.

They evidently understood what was going on, for they reached over the edge of the ramparts, pistol in hand, and fired downward.

Of course, they could not see what they were doing, but

they were more successful than they had been when they had light, for they succeeded in wounding a couple of the youths.

Dick, fearing that some of the boys might be killed, ordered a retreat.

They had already succeeded in rolling the greater number of the barrels and boxes down the side of the mound, anyway, and could afford to go.

The "Liberty Boys" gave utterance to a loud cheer, and started down the side of the mound.

They got to going faster and faster, and brought up in a pile at the bottom.

None were injured, beyond the scraping off of a little skin, here and there, which did not count.

The soldiers had been busy removing the boxes and barrels, and the youths went to work and helped them.

There came scattering shots from the fort, but they did no damage, and after an hour of hard work the barrels and boxes were all in the patriot camp.

Bonfires were burning here, and the camp was light.

The boxes and barrels were opened and were found to contain both clothing and provisions.

It was quite a windfall.

There were blankets, both cloth and rubber, and these were especially acceptable.

Off in the forest more fires were burning, and the sound of chopping could be heard.

The work was going on in the night-time as well as in the daytime.

Men were busy chopping down trees, and others were sawing them into the proper lengths, after which still other workmen worked the beams into shape and fitted them with mortises and tenons.

This work was kept up night and day, for five days, and then it was deemed time to surprise the British in the fort.

Marion figured that they had sufficient beams to make a tower as high as would be needed, and so on the night of the 22d of April the beams were dragged out into an open space commanding the fort, and work was begun on the tower.

The great beams and sills were put together, in the fashion of an old New England "house-raising," and up, up rose the wooden tower.

In the darkness it was difficult to see how high the tower was, but when morning's light came it was seen that it was higher than the fort, and that the riflemen on top of it could pick the fort defenders off, as if they were squirrels.

The sentinel, when he saw the tower, as he was pacing

slowly back and forth on his beat, in the fort, was almost paralyzed with amazement.

He rubbed his eyes and looked again.

Then he gave the alarm.

Fifteen minutes later every eye in the fort was on the queer-looking tower, and then, when, as the sun came up, the patriot soldiers on top of the tower opened fire on those within the fort, the latter quickly realized that it was all up with them.

They would either have to surrender, or they would be shot at the leisure and pleasure of the men on the tower.

The British tried to shield themselves and return the fire of the patriots, but they began dropping, one after another, and saw that they had no chance.

The men on the tower were picked marksmen—men who could bring down a squirrel out of the top of the highest tree, and it was no job for them to bring down a redcoat.

An hour of this was all that the British wanted, and then a white flag was hung out.

The fort had surrendered!

CHAPTER X.

"DEFEATED BUT NOT DISGRACED."

"I hear firing, Dick!"

"So do I, Bob; I have heard it for some time."

"Sounds like a battle, don't you think?"

"Yes, Bob."

"What do you think about it?"

"I think that Greene is engaged in battle with the British, Bob, and I wish we were there to help!"

"Perhaps we shall be able to get there in time to help, old man."

"I hope so!"

"Where do you think the battle is being held? It sounds too far north for Camden, don't you think?"

"Yes; it sounds in the direction of Hobkirk's Hill."

"So it does; and in that case——"

"Lord Rawdon and the British have moved forward and attacked our fellows, Bob!"

Generals Marion and Lee, and their forces were returning to the patriot army with their prisoners captured at Fort Watson.

Dick and the "Liberty Boys," impatient at such slow marching, had pushed on ahead and were now fifteen miles in advance of Marion and Lee.

They were now two miles east from Hobkirk's Hill, where they knew Greene and the patriot army were.

Dick gave the order to march on the double-quick.

The "Liberty Boys," although fatigued by the long walk they had already taken that day, responded promptly.

"Oh, if we only had our horses!" exclaimed Dick.

"We could get there quickly, eh, old man?" from Bob.

"But none too quick."

"You are right about that."

The youths marched rapidly westward.

When they emerged from the timber and came in sight of Hobkirk's Hill, they saw that a battle was raging.

"Rawdon has attacked General Greene, Bob," said Dick, eagerly, "and," he added, after a searching look, "I fear he is getting the best of it."

"It looks that way, Dick."

"Perhaps we may be able to turn the tide of battle; forward, boys, at your best speed!"

The "Liberty Boys" hastened forward, as eager to reach the scene as if it had been a picnic or pleasure party of some kind that they were to join and engage in.

As they drew near, and it could be seen that General Greene and the patriot forces seemed to be on the defensive, and, in fact, getting the worst of the battle, the youths broke into a run.

They were eager to go to the aid of their comrades.

Suddenly they attacked the British with fierce vigor.

They rushed upon the enemy, with wild cheers.

This attack, coming so suddenly and unexpectedly, disconcerted the British not a little, and caused a flurry in their ranks.

Had there been five hundred of the "Liberty Boys" instead of only one hundred, the diversion might have made it possible for Greene to repulse the British and win the day; but there were not five hundred of the youths, and notwithstanding the fact that they fought like fiends, the advantage gained for the patriots was only temporary.

General Greene, as the shades of evening descended, was forced to withdraw from his position; he had been defeated, but not disgraced; for his defeat was traceable to a misunderstanding of some of his orders, which had thrown his forces into confusion, even the brave regiment of Marylanders having been almost demoralized.

The patriots retreated only about half a mile, and as darkness had now descended, they went into camp.

Greene sent for Dick immediately.

"I have work for you to do, Dick," the general said; "I wish you to go and find out what the British intend doing, if such a thing is possible. They have driven us

out of our position, and I wish to know whether or not there is danger of a night attack."

"Very well, sir; I will go at once," said Dick.

He hastened out of the tent and away, to make his preparations for the task that had been assigned to him.

This did not take him long.

It consisted merely of doffing his uniform and donning a rough suit of citizen's clothing.

Then Dick left the encampment and stole away through the timber.

He had not gone more than a quarter of a mile when he suddenly bumped against some one in the darkness.

CHAPTER XI.

DICK MAKES A CAPTURE:

Instantly Dick grappled with the fellow.

He thought he understood who the man was.

Without doubt he was a spy from the British army.

He was approaching the patriot encampment with the same object in view which was taking Dick toward the British army.

The man grappled with Dick, fiercely, and made every effort to get the better of the youth.

Dick discerned that the fellow was doing his best to draw a weapon, but he would not permit this.

If the man should succeed in doing so, Dick would be forced to kill him, and he did not wish to do this.

So the struggle went on, with only nature's weapons.

The redcoat—for such he evidently was—was a powerful fellow.

He gave Dick a hard fight.

He was quick on his feet, but not so quick as Dick.

The youth was the more agile and active.

He was fully as strong as the redcoat, too.

And he was a better wrestler.

He soon proved this to the complete satisfaction of his opponent.

He worked around till he got the hold he wished, and then he threw the redcoat.

Dick threw the fellow hard.

The man's head struck a tree.

He was knocked senseless.

Dick quickly realized this when the fellow lay still, and did not try to get up and renew the struggle.

"I hope I haven't killed the fellow," thought Dick;

"General Greene may succeed in getting some information out of him, if I take him back to camp alive."

Dick lost no time.

It was not more than a quarter of a mile back to camp. He would carry his prisoner.

Stooping, he got hold of the insensible man, and, lifting him, threw him over his shoulder, much as if he were a bag of corn.

Then Dick set out through the timber.

The man was heavy—he must have weighed at least one hundred and eighty pounds.

But Dick carried him with seeming ease.

Of course, he could not walk rapidly, but he did not need to.

He was soon at the camp.

When he entered, carrying the redcoat on his shoulder, he created a sensation.

He left the man in charge of the soldiers, and, explaining, briefly, started once more on his tramp through the timber.

Half an hour later he reached the foot of Hobkirk's Hill.

The British had encamped here for the night.

They had been so exhausted as a result of the battle that they had camped in their tracks, as it were.

Dick paused and took a survey of the situation.

He could see the soldiers sitting about the fires.

The youth was familiar with the hill, and was trying to decide on the best way to go in order to slip up close to the encampment.

He finally decided which way to go, and then stole cautiously forward.

Dick wished to get near enough to some of the groups about the fires to hear the conversation of the soldiers, if possible.

Dick knew that if he could do this he would likely learn something that would be of interest, as soldiers, as a rule, talked of what was to be done on the morrow, or at an early date.

Dick had advanced only a few yards when he was startled by the challenge:

"Halt! Who goes there?"

CHAPTER XII.

A STRUGGLE IN THE DARK.

Dick whirled and darted away at the top of his speed. Crack!

The sentinel had fired.

He fired by guess, however, as he could not see Dick.

The result was that he did not hit the youth.

The camp was alarmed, however, and fifty of the redcoats at least came running out in the direction in which Dick was supposed to have gone.

He had not run directly away, however.

He went in a semi-circle, and, skirting the camp, approached it from the opposite side.

He approached very slowly and carefully, this time.

He located the sentinel, and slipped past him.

Dick finally reached a point near enough to a group of redcoats so that he could understand what was said.

They were talking about the excitement of a few moments before.

"Some rebel spy," was the decision they came to.

Then they talked of other matters, and among the things mentioned was that Lord Rawdon, the commander of the troops, had returned to Camden.

"So he's in Camden, eh?" thought Dick. "Now, what shall I do? Shall I return to camp and report what I have learned, or shall I go to Camden and try to learn more?"

Dick decided upon the latter course.

Having decided, he proceeded to act.

He slipped back past the sentinel, and when he was at what he considered a safe distance he rose to his feet.

As he did so a couple of men leaped upon him.

"We've got you now, you cursed rebel spy!" hissed one.

The two had skirted the hill, as Dick had done, and had got around there in time to intercept Dick as he was withdrawing from the camp.

Dick did not utter a cry or speak.

He began struggling, however, in a way that astonished the two who had attacked him.

The youth knew that the camp would be aroused immediately, and that unless he escaped very quickly he would soon be surrounded by redcoats and his escape would be an utter impossibility.

So he struggled as he had never done before.

"What's going on there?" cried the sentinel.

"We've—caught—a—spy!" was the reply, in a halting manner from one of Dick's assailants.

"Shall I call to the boys and have some of them come for your assistance?"

"No; we—can—handle—him—I guess."

But the redcoats were to find that they could not handle Dick.

The youth was a wonder.

He presently succeeded in getting in a couple of terrific blows on the jaw of one of the redcoats, and as he let go he

hold and sank to the ground insensible, Dick attacked the other so fiercely as to amaze him.

He became alarmed, as well.

"Get help!" he called out to the sentinel. "This fellow is a fiend!"

The sentinel at once called out to the redcoats at the nearest fire, and a number leaped up and came running.

Dick was watching what was going on.

He saw the redcoats coming.

He realized that unless he got away very quickly he would be unable to do so at all.

He struck his assailant twice in succession.

The second blow alighted on the fellow's jaw, dazing him, and causing him to let go his hold.

Dick gave the fellow a shove, and down he went.

Then Dick leaped away.

The approaching redcoats were within twenty feet, and saw Dick's dark figure as he moved away.

"Halt!" one cried. "Halt, or we will fire!"

Dick made no reply.

He raced onward.

He was free, and intended to remain so.

Seeing that he did not obey their command, the redcoats fired a volley.

The bullets whistled all around the fugitive.

None of them took effect, however.

It is not so strange when it is considered that it was so dark the pursuers could not see the person they were shooting at, and that the shots were fired while they were running.

Onward rushed Dick, and after him came the redcoats.

They kept yelling to Dick to stop, but, of course, he did nothing of the kind.

He would have been foolish to do so, for now his chances for escaping were very good.

Dick was well aware of this, and kept on running at his best speed.

Suddenly the ground seemed to give way beneath the youth's feet.

Downward he plunged, through space, and striking with great force against something very hard, he lost consciousness.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN THE STONE QUARRY.

When Dick recovered consciousness, which was but a few minutes later, he having been only temporarily dazed, he rubbed his head and wondered where he was.

Then he asked himself what had happened.

Then it suddenly came back to him.

He remembered that he had been chased by redcoats, and had fallen.

He realized, too, where he was.

He had noticed, the day the patriot army came to Hobkirk's Hill, and encamped there, the fact that on the north side of the hill there was a stone quarry.

At one point the quarry was at least twenty feet deep.

Dick realized that he had fallen into this quarry.

"Jove!" he thought; "no wonder it gave me a good bump! But now I must be getting out of here—that is, if I haven't a broken leg."

One of Dick's legs pained him somewhat.

He rose, gingerly, to his feet and tested the limb.

He discovered that it was not broken.

"Good!" he thought; "I'm glad of that."

Then he started.

He heard the voices of the redcoats who had been chasing him.

They were still searching for the fugitive.

Dick wondered if the redcoats had any idea regarding what had become of him.

He listened intently.

He heard them talking the matter over, and presently one said:

"I'll wager a month's wages that the spy fell into the quarry; and if that is the case he is lying there at the bottom, now, dead as a herring!"

"I shouldn't wonder if you were right, Joclyn," said another.

"Well, let's take a look down in the quarry, anyway," suggested a third.

"All right; come along."

"They're coming down here!" thought Dick. "That means for me to get out."

He moved away toward the entrance to the quarry.

He realized that he must get there, and through and out before the redcoats got there, if he wished to escape.

He was unable to reach the quarry entrance ahead of the redcoats, however.

They were nearer it than he, and reached there first.

There was only one thing for Dick to do, and that was to hide himself at the side and wait till the redcoats were well within the quarry; then he could, perhaps, succeed in slipping out.

He found a place and crouched behind a huge rock.

The redcoats came past within ten feet of the youth.

"If he fell down in here, running at the speed he was

going, he's a dead spy!" said one of the redcoats, as they were passing Dick.

"That's right," agreed a companion. "I think we'll find him down here."

"I don't think you will!" thought Dick.

He waited till the redcoats were well across toward the farther side of the quarry, and then he rose from his hiding place and stole toward the entrance of the quarry.

He had almost reached the entrance when he stumbled over a loose stone, making considerable noise.

"What's that!" cried one of the redcoats.

"The spy!—I'll wager!" from another.

"He's slipping away!"

"Don't let him escape us!"

The redcoats rushed toward the entrance of the quarry.

Dick, realizing that haste was necessary now, rushed out through the entrance to the quarry.

After him, pell-mell, came the redcoats.

They fired a volley from their pistols, but too late to do any damage, as Dick had passed through the entrance and turned to one side, thus getting out of range.

The redcoats, as soon as they were out of the quarry, paused and listened.

They heard Dick's footsteps, and gave chase.

By pausing frequently and listening, they were enabled to keep on the youth's track for quite a distance, but Dick finally got into the timber where the ground was soft, and his footsteps could no longer be heard.

Then they were unable to follow the fugitive, and disappointed and disgusted they returned to the encampment.

Dick hastened onward.

His leg pained him considerably, so he was unable to go as fast as he otherwise would have done.

He made very good speed, however, and walked rapidly toward Camden.

He thought it best to remain in the timber, as he feared there might be redcoats on the main road.

It would take a longer time to reach the town by traveling through the timber, but it would be safer.

"I was pretty lucky to get out of that scrape as well as I have," thought Dick; "I was in double danger—from the bullets of the redcoats and the fall down into the quarry."

Dick could hardly understand how it was that he had not been killed instead of only stunned by the fall.

He remembered, exactly, how the quarry looked, and he knew that it would have been dangerous to leap down into the pit in the daytime, to say nothing of falling down into it in the dark.

"Well, I'm all right, anyway," he thought; "and if I have good luck I may secure some information in Camden."

He hastened forward.

He had gone a mile or so when he suddenly emerged from the timber into an open space of a couple of acres in extent, as he could see by the faint light of the stars.

Near the centre of the clearing was a cabin—which Dick could just make out, it being a shade darker than its surroundings.

And then, as he got around on the front side of the cabin, Dick saw a light shining through the window.

He had just had time to note this when he was startled by hearing a wild scream.

The scream came from within the cabin.

Then a voice, unmistakably feminine, cried out, in a agony of terror:

"Don't strike me, father! Please don't!"

Then a hoarse, masculine voice roared out:

"Stop your howling, you tiger-cat, or I'll not only strike you, but I'll murder you!"

Then there was the sound of hurrying footsteps, a crash as of a chair upsetting, followed by a shrill scream.

CHAPTER XIV.

DICK INTERFERES.

"Jove!" thought Dick, "I really think I shall have to interfere. The girl addressed the man as 'father,' but that doesn't give him the right to pound her around, as he is evidently bent on doing."

Dick rushed to the cabin and tried the door.

As good luck would have it the door was not barred.

It came open in response to Dick's push.

He stepped through the doorway into the room without ceremony.

He was just in time.

A single glance at the tableau before him showed him this.

In one corner stood a girl of about seventeen years.

She was dressed in a rough dress of homespun, but in spite of this she was, Dick thought, the most beautiful girl he had ever seen.

Her face was fair, with rosy cheeks, and her eyes were blue as the sky on a summer's day, her hair being golden brown in hue.

Just now there was a frightened look in the beautiful eyes, and the rosy lips were parted in terror.

The girl stood in the farther corner of the room, her arm uplifted as if to shield herself, while in front of her, a heavy stick in his hand, was a man of about forty-five years.

He was a fierce-looking fellow, with bushy hair and beard, and his flushed face betrayed the fact that he had been drinking.

The ruffian—for he looked to be such—held the stick high above his head and seemed to be enjoying the fright which the girl showed.

Dick thought the man was about to strike the girl, and he called out:

"Drop that stick! Don't you hit the girl, you ruffian!" A cry, half of joy, half of fear, escaped the lips of the girl.

She looked at Dick in a frightened manner.

The man whirled, with a savage snarl, and faced the youth.

"Hello! Who'n blazes air you?" he growled, hoarsely and threateningly.

"Oh, it doesn't matter who I am," replied Dick, calmly; "it is enough to say that I am one who will not stand idly by and see a big ruffian beat a girl with a club."

"Whut's thet?—d'ye dar' ter call me er ruffian?" the fellow almost howled.

Dick smiled, coldly.

"It doesn't take much daring to tell you that," he said, quietly.

"You have told the truth, too, sir," said the girl, her voice sounding like musical bells tinkling; "he is a ruffian, even though he does claim to be my father."

Dick shook his head.

"It can't be possible," he said; "he cannot be your father."

"But I am, jes' ther same, ye young whipper-snapper!" the man cried. "An' now, I'd like ter know whut right ye hev ter bu'st inter er man's house in this heer fashion an' interfere whur ye hain't consarned?"

"You wish to know what right I have to do such a thing?"

"Yas."

"Well, the right of a man to interfere and prevent a brute from mistreating a child."

"Oh, I'm er brute, too, am I?"

There was a wicked leer on the man's face, and a threatening tone of his voice.

Dick replied, unhesitatingly:

"You certainly are!—and about as big a brute as it has ever been my misfortune to meet."

A hoarse growl escaped the lips of the ruffian

"I reckon, young feller, thet ye don' know who I am!" he cried.

"You reckon correctly; I don't know who you are, but for that matter neither do I care."

"Waal, I'll tell ye, jes' ther same. My name is Mike Bennett—'Bad Mike,' they call me, aroun' heer."

"I guess they have named you correctly," said Dick, calmly; "you look it."

The ruffian eyed Dick for a few moments in silence, and then he pointed toward the door.

"Git out uv heer!" he ordered.

"And leave you free to whip this—child?" asked Dick.

"Yas; she's my darter, an' I'll whup 'er ef I want'er."

"Not while I'm around, you won't!"

Dick looked the fellow straight in the eyes.

Evidently the ruffian did not like the look which Dick gave him.

His desire was, seemingly, to get the youth out of the house without having trouble with him.

This might seem strange, seeing that he was known as "Bad Mike" Bennett, but the fact was that he saw a light in Dick's eyes that awed him.

He instinctively realized that the youth was no common individual.

He made a great show of bluster, however, and pointing to the door, cried, angrily:

"Git out uv my house, I tell ye!"

Dick did not move.

Instead, he set his jaws firmly, and a peculiar glint came into his eyes.

The ruffian noted this.

"Air ye goin' ter git out?" he almost howled.

He was almost black in the face so great was his rage.

Dick shook his head.

"I'm not going to leave the house till you throw that stick in the fire and promise me that you will behave yourself in the future," said Dick, quietly.

"Whut! me prommus ye enny sech thing ez that?" the man cried.

"That is just what you must do!"

"Bad Mike" took a step forward and shook the stick threateningly in Dick's face.

"See heer," he growled; "ther on'y reezon w'y I've be'n ez pashunt ez I hev is becos ye air er stranger an' don' know me. I hated ter jump onter ye an' kill ye without warnin' ye, d'ye unnerstan'?"

Dick nodded.

"Oh, yes, I understand that you are a big blow and coward," said Dick, quietly; "I have seen dozens like you."

A hoarse roar escaped the lips of the ruffian.

It was a new experience for him to be talked to in this fashion.

And the worst of it was that the fellow realized that the youth who faced him so unflinchingly, and talked to him so straight, was one with whom it would not do to trifle.

There was that peculiar air about him which proclaims the person to be one with a will of iron and possessed of splendid courage.

"Bad Mike" realized this, as the dog realizes its master when the man fixes it with his eye.

Still the man could not think the youth could be his match, physically.

His idea was that the young fellow was armed, and would draw a weapon when it came to a contest.

He had made up his mind, therefore, that if he could get hold of the youth he would quickly get the better of him.

"So ye've seen duzzens like me, hev ye?" Bennett growled.

He took another step forward as he spoke.

He wished to get within reach of Dick and take him unawares.

But Dick seemed to read the fellow like a book.

A scornful smile curled his lips.

"Yes, I've seen dozens like you," replied Dick, quietly; "and if you think you can get close enough to me to jump upon me without my knowing what you are going to do, you are badly mistaken, my friend; for your intentions are written in your face and eyes, so that even by the poor light of the tallow candle it is easy to read."

"Look out for him, sir!" cried the girl.

"Ye shet up, Daisy Bennett!" growled the man. "I s'pose ye'd be glad ter see this heer young scoundrel git ther better uv yer dad, wouldn't ye?"

"Of course she would! Why shouldn't she?"

"W'y, I'm 'er father!" he exclaimed. "Ortenter she ter want 'er own dad ter git ther better uv ennybuddy?"

"Not if that father is a brute and a scoundrel, as you are!"

With a hoarse howl of rage the man leaped forward, intent on seizing the youth.

CHAPTER XV.

"BAD MIKE" GETS THE WORST OF IT.

But Dick was on his guard.

He had been watching the man's eyes, and knew he

was going to make the attack, as quickly, almost, as the man himself.

It did not require the cry of the girl, and her word "Look out!" to warn him that the attack was coming.

Out shot Dick's fist.

It caught the ruffian squarely in the chest and sent him reeling backward.

"Bad Mike" nearly went down, and would have done had he not reached the wall, which rendered him friend assistance, and enabled him to regain his equilibrium.

"Bad Mike" balanced himself against the wall for a few moments, and stared at Dick.

The strength of the youth and the force of the blow which he had received astonished the ruffian.

He had had no idea that the youth could strike such a blow.

Mike was not materially damaged, however, and after catching his breath he rushed toward Dick with the ferocity of a mad bull.

"I'll fix ye fur thet!" he growled. "I'll ha'f kill ye see ef I don't!"

"I'll see to it that you don't!" retorted Dick.

The youth gave ground before the rush of the other, and for a few moments contented himself with ducking, dodging, evading and parrying the blows of the other.

"Bad Mike" thrashed the atmosphere at a great rate.

His blows were powerful ones, but they did not land, did no damage, save to Mike himself, who was rapidly becoming tired.

Presently he stopped, and, placing his hands on his hips, said, in a tone of disgust:

"Say, whut kind uv er feller air ye, ennyhow? D'ye call thet ther fa'r thing—thet thar runnin' an' jumpin' aroun' I mean?"

"Why, yes, I call it the fair thing; don't you?"

"No, I don't; w'y don' ye stan' up an' fight like a man?"

"Oh, you want me to stand up and fight like a man."

Dick spoke just as if he had just found out what was wanted.

"Sartin; uv course I do. Whut d'ye take me fur? hain't no foot racer!"

"No?" in simulated surprise. "I thought that was your best hold."

"No, et hain't my bes' holt. My bes' holt is wras'lin'."

"Oh, that's it?"

"Yas; w'y, I kin throw er b'ar!"

"You must be a terrible fellow, indeed."

Dick spoke quietly, and "Bad Mike" fancied the youth was making sport of him.

He uttered a growl, and advanced.

"Stan' up, now, an' let me poun' ye!" Mike invited.

The girl, a frightened, anxious look in her eyes, was watching the scene, eagerly.

"Don't let him get hold of you, sir," she called out to Dick; "he is oh, very, very strong, and will be sure to hurt you if he gets his hands on you!"

"You bet I will!" the ruffian said, with a fiendish grin.

"Thank you, miss," said Dick, "but he will find that he is not dealing with a weak girl now!"

Dick stood his ground this time.

He had his eyes on the man advancing toward him.

He waited till Mike was almost within reach, and then he suddenly took a step forward and aimed a blow at the fellow's face.

Up went Mike's arm in a clumsy attempt to guard his face.

This was what Dick had expected, and was just what he wished.

In throwing up his arm the man left his chest and stomach unprotected.

Out shot Dick's left fist.

It landed right at the pit of Mike's stomach—the most vulnerable point in a man's anatomy.

It was a terrific stroke.

Down went Mike to the floor, with a thump and a jar that shook the cabin.

A groan of pain, of downright agony escaped him, and clasping his hands upon his stomach the fellow kicked and squirmed, and groaned, again and still again.

"Does it hurt?" asked Dick, quietly.

"Oh-oo-oo-oo-oh!" groaned Mike, making horrible grimaces and writhing and kicking.

The girl stared at Mike and then at Dick, in wondering amazement.

She was astonished beyond measure by the result of the encounter.

She had expected nothing else than that the youth would be the one to go down, and she could not understand it.

Neither could "Bad Mike," for that matter.

He had thought that he would have an easy task in getting the better of the youth, but somehow he had slipped up on it.

"You had better get away, sir, while you can," advised the girl.

Dick shook his head.

"Oh, no," he said; "Mike hasn't had half a lesson yet."

"If he should get hold of you——" the girl began.

"He would wish he had not," interposed Dick, quietly.

"Don't be afraid. He needs a lesson, and since I have started in, I may as well make it a good one."

Dick again turned his attention to "Bad Mike."

The latter had risen to a sitting posture.

He still had his hands clasped across his stomach, however, and rocked backward and forward and groaned terribly.

"How do you feel, Mike," asked Dick, "any better?"

"Oh, but I'll make you feel worse when I git hold of you!" groaned Mike.

"Perhaps you will—when you get hold of me."

"Oh, I'll git hol' uv ye, all right!"

"Perhaps so, but I doubt it; shall I assist you to rise, Mike, my friend?"

"I don't need enny uv your assistance."

"Oh, you don't?"

"No; I kin get up myself."

"All right; glad to hear it. Hurry and get up, I want to knock you down again."

A growl of rage escaped "Bad Mike."

The coolness of the strange youth was very exasperating. He scrambled slowly and awkwardly to his feet.

"Well, are you ready?" asked Dick, briskly; and as he spoke he advanced toward the ruffian.

"Hol' on! Hol' on!" cried "Bad Mike," in alarm. "Whut d'ye mean, ennyhow?"

"I mean to knock you down again; that's what I said I was going to do, you know."

"Yas, I know; but ye hain't givin' me no fa'r show."

"I'm not?"

"Nc."

"How do you make that out?"

"How do I make et out?"

"Yes."

"Easy enuff; here ye're goin' to go fur me afore I'm redy. I hain't hed time ter git my breath."

"Oh, you want more time to get ready, is that it?"

"Yas, thet's it; I want er fa'r shake, I do!"

"All right," said Dick, "you shall have it; I'll wait till you get rested. Just take your time, and when you are ready let me know."

"All right; I'll do et."

"Bad Mike" stepped back and leaned against the wall, while Dick folded his arms and stood erect near the centre of the room.

The girl still kept her place in the corner and kept her eyes fixed upon the face of the youth who had come to her assistance.

"Bad Mike" was panting and still looked tired.

Dick waited a couple of minutes, and then said:

"Well, are you ready now?"

"Bad Mike" drew a long breath or two, flailed the air with his huge arms a couple of times, and then said:

"Yas, I'm ready; I'm as good as new, an' tell ye whut et is, young feller, ye wanter look out fur me."

As he spoke he rushed toward Dick.

Dick saw that it was the man's desire to come to close quarters.

Feeling confident that he could handle "Bad Mike," Dick decided to let the fellow have his way.

Mike evidently expected the youth to strike at him, but to his surprise Dick did nothing of the kind.

Instead, he ducked and darted under the other fellow's arm.

Dick seized "Bad Mike" about the waist and twisted him around till he got just the hold he desired.

As the two came together the girl gave utterance to a cry of fear, for she was afraid the youth would be no match for the burly man.

Then suddenly something happened which caused her to give vent to another cry of surprise and delight this time, however.

Dick had suddenly secured what is known as the "cross-buttock" hold on his opponent and suddenly up into the air flew "Bad Mike's" feet.

His body followed, as a matter of course, and went clear over Dick's head.

Down with a crash went the big ruffian, striking the floor with such force as to shake the cabin.

"Bad Mike" struck on his head and hard-headed though he was, was knocked senseless.

At this instant the sound of hurried footsteps was heard.

"Some one is coming!" exclaimed the girl.

CHAPTER XVI.

"BAD MIKE" HAS A GOOD SPELL.

Dick ran to the door and barred it.

He was only just in time.

Some one knocked on the door, and then, without waiting to see if the door would be opened, tried it.

"Hello!" called out a voice. "Hello, in there!"

Dick promptly blew out the candle.

Then he stepped to the side of the girl and said:

"I think they are redcoats, and if so it will not do for me to let them get hold of me."

"You are a patriot?" the girl whispered.

"Yes."

"So am I; but my father is a Tory."

"I am glad he is insensible, then; he would open the door otherwise, and it would all be up with me."

There was no window in the cabin, which made it an impossibility for those outside—for there was more than one—to look in.

Dick was very glad of this.

Again there came a loud rapping on the door.

It was followed almost immediately by the hailing voice

"Hello, in there, I say! Wake up! Open the door!"

But Dick did not intend to open the door.

Neither did he make response.

He stood there, silently, and waited.

He hoped that the British—for such he believed the men to be—would go away.

But this they did not seem inclined to do.

Dick could hear the sound of their voices, and then he heard their footsteps as the men moved around.

There came a louder rapping than ever.

"Open the door!" cried a fierce voice. "Open it, or we will knock it down!"

Still Dick remained silent.

After half a minute of waiting, Dick heard an angry voice, raised as if giving commands.

Presently there came the sound of rushing feet.

Next there was a loud bump, as something hard struck against the door.

Dick understood what this meant.

The men had secured something in the way of a battering-ram, and were going to try to batter the door down.

"I must not permit that," thought Dick.

Then he took down a rifle from off some forks nailed to the wall, and after examining the weapon and finding that it was loaded, Dick leveled it and fired through the door.

A wild yell of pain and rage came from the outside.

Then there was the rush of feet.

The men were hastening to get out of range.

Dick smiled; grimly.

Presently there was the crash of firearms, and several bullets came through the door.

The redcoats were returning Dick's fire.

The bullets did no damage, however.

This was kept up for perhaps ten minutes, Dick firing several shots and the British several volleys, and then silence reigned supreme.

Nothing more was heard of the men outside, and Dick made up his mind they had gone.

At just about this time Dick heard "Bad Mike" stir.

He relighted the candle.

The man's eyes were open.
 He stared at Dick for a few moments, and then said:
 "Who air ye?"
 "It doesn't matter who I am," replied Dick; "I guess you remember me. We had a little difficulty a while ago."
 "Oh, yes; I remember, now."
 Mike rose to a sitting posture.
 "How do you feel?" the youth asked.
 "Like I had be'n pounded with a club."
 Dick smiled.
 "I judged you would feel somewhat sore," he replied.
 "Wusser'n thet; 'sumwhut' don't near cover whut I feel, young feller. I feel awful sore."
 "I'm sorry," Dick remarked, quietly; "but you forced me to handle you roughly."
 The man nodded.
 "I know I did," he acknowledged; "I remember all about et, an' I tell ye trooly thet I'm glad ye thumped me the way ye did!"
 Dick was surprised, and looked it.
 "Oh, et's er fack," Bad Mike hastened to say; "I mean et, an' I'll tell ye whut et is, young feller, I'm goin' ter turn over er new leaf, I am. I thort I wuz er bad man, an' all thet, but sence I hev let myse'f git licked by er youngster like ye, I hev made up my min' I hain't very bad, arter all; an' I'm ergoin' ter quit et, an' go ter work."
 "That is a very sensible resolution," said Dick; "and I hope, for the sake of yourself and your daughter, that you will stick to it."
 "Oh, I'll stick ter et; ye kin bet on thet!"
 "Oh, father, I'm so glad!" cried the girl.
 Dick stepped forward and offered the man his hand.
 "Here is my hand to show you that I don't bear you any malice for the manner in which you tried to treat me a while ago."
 The man took Dick's hand, and, with a grin, remarked:
 "Waal, I guess thet ef I don' b'ar ye no malice ye ortenter b'ar me none, fur I got ther worst uv et, a w'ile ergo."
 "That is true, too," agreed Dick; "and now I hope you will pardon me if I say that I hope you won't mistreat your daughter again."
 "Oh, I won't; she's er good gal, an' et's on'y w'en I've be'n a-drinkin' thet I'm mean—an' I don' inten' ter git drunk no more. Et don' pay."
 "You are right about that. Well, I must be going."
 "Hol' on," said Bad Mike; "didn't I heer shootin' goin' on aroun' heer erwhile ergo?"
 "I guess you did," replied Dick; and then he explained.
 "Don' ye s'pose ther fellers air hid close by, an' thet ef ye go out they'll plug ye?" asked Bad Mike.

"I hardly think so," replied Dick. "They probably gave this up as a bad job, and went on about their business."

The girl expressed the fear that the men were out there and that they would fire upon Dick the instant he showed himself, but he said he thought not, and insisted on going.

He took the girl's hand and said good-by, and then made his way to the door, unbarred it, and, opening the door quickly, stepped through the doorway and out into the night.

As he did so, "Crack! crack! crack!" went several pistol shots, and the bullets rattled all around Dick.

CHAPTER XVII.

IN THE CELLAR.

Dick did not try to re-enter the house.

He had no more time to spare.

He heard a scream from within the cabin.

It was the girl's voice.

Dick knew the girl had not been hit by a bullet, because she was out of range.

He realized that the reason she screamed was because she feared he had been hit by a bullet.

"I'm all right; good-by!" he called out, and then he darted around the end of the cabin and ran toward the timber at the side clearing.

There was a yell from the darkness, and Dick knew that he was being pursued.

"Well, let them come!" he thought. "I don't think they will be able to catch me."

Dick ran swiftly.

He soon reached the timber.

He plunged into it just as the pursuers fired another volley.

None of the bullets came anywhere near Dick.

"What fools men are to fire in the darkness, and when they are running," he thought; "it would be the greatest accident in the world if they were to hit a person under such circumstances."

Dick ran southward until he was sure he had passed Camden, which lay on the left.

Then presently he turned to the left and ran in this direction, nearly half a mile.

He paused and listened.

He could hear no sound of pursuit.

"I guess I have shaken them off," the youth said to

himself; "well, I hope I have. I don't want them around when I try to slip into Camden."

Dick now turned his face toward the north and made his way in that direction.

He moved slowly and cautiously.

He did not wish to be discovered again.

He could not enter Camden unless he did so secretly.

He moved noiselessly forward.

Occasionally he paused and listened.

Everywhere was silence.

Presently, however, Dick heard sounds in front which indicated that he was close to the town.

Then he emerged from the timber and found himself at the edge of the town.

After listening a few moments and hearing nothing, Dick again stole forward.

He was very careful, and advanced very slowly.

He located the street entrance into the town and bore away to one side so as to avoid it.

He knew there would be sentinels there.

He entered a yard and crossed it.

He had almost reached the rear fence when a dog rushed out from under the house and came at him, barking furiously.

"Great guns!" thought Dick, "that dog will arouse everybody in the town!"

While thinking thus, Dick was not standing still.

At the first note from the dog Dick had leaped forward, and reaching the fence he bounded over it.

The dog was there almost at the instant, and leaped up against the top board of the fence and barked even more uproariously.

Dick had alighted in an alley.

Another back yard lay directly in front of him.

The youth bounded over the fence and was in this yard.

He walked rapidly across the yard, and as he approached the house he heard a window go up.

Then he caught a glimpse of a man leaning out of the upstairs window.

"I wonder what that dog is barking at?" Dick heard the man say.

The youth was well within the shadow of the house and so was not seen, but he accidentally stepped on a stick, which broke, with a sharp, snapping noise.

"Who's there?" called out the man, in a startled tone.

"Who's there, I say?"

Of course, Dick did not reply.

Instead, he darted around the corner of the house.

There was considerable noise and confusion over in the yard where the dog was.

The dog was still barking, and there was the sound excited voices.

The people of the house had come out of doors to what the dog was making such a noise about.

A British soldier, who had been on sentry duty near was in the yard also.

He thought that it might be possible that a spy trying to slip into the town.

Dick made his way out of the yard and into the street.

He moved onward down the street at a rapid pace.

Dick knew where Lord Rawdon had his headquarters.

Dick made his way toward the house in question.

He went around to the alley at the rear.

He stood at the back fence and listened for a few moments.

Hearing nothing, he climbed the fence and stole across the yard toward the house.

He reached the rear of the building without having attracted attention, at least, so far as he knew.

At any rate he had heard no sound to indicate that his presence had been detected.

Like most houses in that part of the country, there was a cellarway at the back of the house.

Dick opened one of the sloping doors and made his way slowly and carefully down the steps.

At the bottom was a door which opened into the cellar.

Dick lifted the latch of this door and pushed.

The door opened.

"Good!" thought the youth; "now if I have good luck I shall be able to get up into the house and I may even be so fortunate as to catch Lord Rawdon holding a council of war."

At this instant Dick started.

He heard footsteps in the back yard, whence he had just come.

The footsteps were approaching the cellarway.

There they ceased, and Dick heard a voice say:

"This way, Sanders; somebody just went down in the cellar. I think it is a rebel spy! Come on, and we will capture him!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

DICK TAKES A SLIDE.

"Great guns!" thought Dick; "I'm in for it now!"

He wondered what he ought to do.

It was so dark in the cellar he could not see his hands before his face.

This made it impossible for him to know whether or not there was any place where he might hide.

He decided to try to get up into the house.

He hastened across the cellar.

He heard the footsteps approach still nearer, outside, and then they began descending the steps.

Dick felt around when he reached the farther wall, and presently found the stairs leading up into the house.

Dick did not hesitate.

He promptly ascended the stairs.

When he reached the top he tried the door.

It opened.

Dick looked cautiously out.

He saw that the room before him was the kitchen.

There was a candle burning, but no one was in the room.

Dick stepped through, into the room, and closed the door behind him.

He heard steps in the cellar as he did so.

There was a bolt to the door, and Dick pushed the bolt into the socket.

"I think my friends will have a hard time getting the door open, now," he thought.

Dick made his way across the room, walking on his tiptoes, so as to keep the men in the cellar from hearing him.

When he reached the door at the farther side of the room, Dick paused and listened.

Footsteps could be plainly heard on the cellar stairs.

"My redcoat friends are coming upstairs," thought Dick.

He opened the door in front of which he stood, and looked cautiously out.

He was looking into a wide hall.

No one was in sight.

Dick stepped through the doorway and pulled the door shut.

"Now which way, I wonder?" he asked himself.

He did not hesitate long.

He made his way along the hall, in the direction of the front of the house.

Suddenly, when about half way along the hall, Dick paused.

He stood in front of a door at his left-hand side.

Voices proceeded from the room into which the door opened.

Dick stepped close to the door, and placing his ear to the keyhole, listened.

"It is Lord Rawdon and some of his officers," thought Dick; "now if I can be allowed to stand here and listen for a few minutes I may learn something of importance."

Dick listened, eagerly, but had not been at his station a minute before there came the sound of a crash.

It sounded in the direction of the kitchen.

"Those redcoats have broken the door open and will be out here after me in a jiffy!" thought Dick. "Now the question is, what shall I do?"

Dick heard footsteps in the room in front of which he stood.

Lord Rawdon and his companions had heard the crash, doubtless.

"They will find me if I don't get away from here in a hurry," thought Dick.

He turned and ran along the hall, going toward the door.

Just as he reached it there came a cry from the other end of the hall:

"Stop! Surrender, or we will fire!"

A quick glance over Dick's shoulder showed him two redcoats standing at the farther end of the hall.

Their muskets were leveled.

"Jove! this begins to look bad for me!" was the thought that flashed through Dick's mind.

Then the door of the room in front of which Dick had stood, listening, opened suddenly and four British officers stepped out into the hall.

Now the redcoats with the muskets could not fire.

This thought came to Dick, and with a bound he was at the door.

He attempted to open it, but the door was locked and bolted.

He pushed the bolt back, and then found that the key was not in the lock.

"Who are you?" roared Lord Rawdon. "What are you doing in here? Surrender!"

But Dick did not intend to surrender, if he could help it.

He turned, and, leaping to the foot of the stairs leading to the upper floor, bounded up the steps.

"After him!" cried Lord Rawdon. "He is a rebel spy, and must not be allowed to escape!"

Dick heard the rush of feet in the hall below.

He went up the stairs at three leaps.

He raced along the hall, toward the farther end.

Dick felt sure he would find a window there.

If there was a window there, and he could raise it and get through, he felt that he might escape, as he had noticed that there was a sort of shed room at the rear, and he could get out on top of this room.

He reached the end of the hall and found the window, as he had hoped.

The redcoats were now upstairs, however, and Dick would have to hurry if he made his escape.

"Stop! Don't try to escape or we will fire!" came the command, but Dick paid no attention to it.

His reply was to raise the window.

Instead of leaping through the opening, however, Dick suddenly dropped upon his face on the floor.

At the same instant, "Crash, roar!" went the pistols, the officers having fired, as Dick had surmised they would.

The bullets whistled over Dick's head, and, springing up, he climbed quickly through the window.

He leaped through so quickly that he had considerable momentum, and went sliding down the sloping roof of the shed room.

Dick tried to stay his descent, or make it slower, but could not.

It increased in speed, if anything, and he shot off the edge and dropped straight downward into the outside cellarway, alighting upon the backs of the two redcoats, who had hastened back out of the house by the route which they had used in entering.

CHAPTER XIX.

BACK IN THE PATRIOT CAMP.

Dick came down with such force that both of the redcoats were knocked down.

They were surprised, as well as shaken up, and for a few moments seemed scarcely to know what had struck them.

This gave Dick a chance to act.

He had not been hurt or even jarred by the fall, and was on his feet in an instant.

He bounded up the steps and out into the yard.

By this time the two redcoats recovered their senses and set up a yell.

They came rushing up out of the cellarway, wild with rage.

They could not see Dick, but had sense enough to pause and listen.

They heard the sound of the youth's footsteps.

Leveling their pistols in the direction of the sound, they fired.

The bullets did not hit Dick, although he heard the sing-g-g of one.

"A miss is as good as a mile," thought the youth.

He continued running.

"I haven't accomplished much, this time," he thought, regretfully; "well, I have done the best I could."

Dick asked himself whether or not he should remain in the town over night, and decided that it would be folly.

The redcoats would be on the alert, and it would be possible for him to get close enough to the officers to overhear their conversation.

He could learn nothing, that night, and he decided it would be wisest and best to return to the patriot encampment, and make another attempt on the next night.

It would be a difficult matter getting out of the town in safety, as it was.

Dick realized this.

The entire town was aroused.

The sentinels would be on watch for him.

It would be an extremely difficult matter to slip through the line and make his escape.

Dick never despaired, however.

He always believed himself capable of doing a thing, until it was proven to him that he could not.

He ran onward for a distance, and then slowed to a walk.

He was nearing the limits of the town.

He would soon be at the point where he would have to run the gantlet of the sentinels.

The farther Dick went the more careful he grew.

Behind him, in the direction of the house occupied by Lord Rawdon, could be heard the sound of loud talking.

"They will be on my heels in a few minutes," thought Dick. "I am practically between two fires."

He moved forward as rapidly as he dared.

He was on his guard.

It was such a dark night that he was unable to see a distance with anything like distinctness.

Presently Dick found himself within a few yards of a sentinel.

Dick could just make out the faint outlines of the redcoat's form.

The sentinel was standing still, and Dick guessed that the fellow heard the noise in the direction of headquarters and wondered what the trouble was.

The sentinel uttered his thoughts aloud, just at that moment, and Dick learned that his guess was right.

"I wonder what all that racket, yonder in the direction of headquarters, is about, anyway?" the sentinel said. "Something is up, sure."

This was true, and as the sound of voices came plainly to the hearing of the sentinel, he moved slowly along on his beat.

"Don't want to let them catch me standing here," he muttered. "I must be attending to business."

which was glad that the redcoat did decide to attend business.

He had stood exactly in the youth's way.

The sound of voices grew louder and plainer, and the youth realized that the redcoats from the house occupied by Lord Rawdon were coming toward where he stood.

He must get away from there very quickly.

Dick waited till the sentinel had moved away a few paces, and then he stole forward.

He moved as cautiously as a red brave on the trail of an enemy in the depths of the forest.

He had crossed the sentinel's path, and was moving forward, when he suddenly stumbled over something which lay in his path.

It was only a stone the size of a cocoanut, but Dick made considerable noise.

"Who goes there?" cried the sentinel.

Click-click!

The hammer of the musket had gone up.

Dick made no reply.

Instead, he bounded forward into the darkness.

He would go it blind and trust to luck.

"Halt! or I will fire!"

Still no reply from Dick.

He was making good use of the moments.

He was running with all his might.

Crack!

The sentinel had fired.

The bullet, discharged at random in the darkness, came within an ace of ending the life of the daring youth, then fell to the ground.

The bullet knocked off Dick's hat and just grazed the sentinel's head.

Had it gone a sixteenth of an inch lower Dick would have been stunned, and would have fallen into the hands of the British enemies; had it gone half an inch lower it would have ended his days.

As it was, he was uninjured; and, minus his hat, raced forward through the darkness.

Loud and excited yells went up from the redcoats who were rushing toward the scene at the sound of the musket shot.

They were in hopes, of course, that the spy had been brought down.

But this was not to be.

Dick was past the danger line now, and made his way forward, rapidly, the only danger being from injuring himself by running into something, or falling over stones.

Dick congratulated himself on his good fortune in escaping from Camden.

He knew that he had been in a dangerous place.

To reach the patriot encampment now was merely the matter of half an hour of steady walking, and Dick arrived in camp at the end of that time and went at once to the tent of General Greene and reported.

"I hated to give up for the time being, even," said Dick. "It is the first setback I have experienced in a long time; but I thought it would be better to wait till to-morrow night, and to come back to camp and let you know what little I have learned."

"That was right, Dick," said General Greene; "you would undoubtedly have been captured had you tried to remain in Camden all night, and you could not have succeeded in getting to overhear the conversation of Lord Rawdon and his officers; they would have seen to that, and I warrant you there are sentinels on duty outside the door of their room."

"I judge you are right, sir; still if you say for me to do so, I will return and do the best I can to secure more information."

"No; wait till to-morrow night, Dick. Then you may try it again—that is, providing the British have not made any decided move during the day."

"Very well, sir."

"Now go and get a good night's sleep, Dick; you need it."

"Thank you; I will do so, sir."

Dick saluted and withdrew.

He went at once to the quarters of the "Liberty Boys," and, rolling himself in a blanket, was soon sound asleep.

CHAPTER XX.

IN A BAD FIX.

The British made no move toward attacking the patriots next day.

They remained in camp at Hobkirk's Hill and took things easy.

Dick Slater and Bob Estabrook were on scouting duty all day and kept General Greene informed regarding what was going on in the British camp.

When night came, Dick began making preparations to go on a spying expedition.

"Let me go along with you, Dick?" said Bob.

Dick pondered a few moments.

The thought came to him that he might be able to make Bob useful in the work in hand, and so he said:

"All right, Bob; you may go along."

Bob was delighted.

He was never so pleased as when permitted to accompany Dick on a spying expedition.

To tell the truth, Bob was almost as good at this kind of work as was Dick himself.

Together they made a very strong team, indeed.

Bob quickly made his arrangements.

He was ready as soon as Dick was.

It was not yet as dark as it would be, so the youths waited a while.

Half an hour later they left the camp and struck off toward Hobkirk's Hill.

It was about a mile distant, so the youths were not long in reaching there.

The British army was encamped on the southern slope, and in order to reach it the youths had to skirt the hill.

When they were around on the west side the youths came in sight of the camp-fires of the British.

"We'll have to be careful now, Bob," said Dick, in a low tone. "We mustn't allow ourselves to be captured."

"You're right, Dick," agreed Bob; "well, you take the lead and I will follow and do exactly as you do."

"All right, Bob."

The youths stole forward.

They succeeded in getting past the sentinel on that side and were soon within a few yards of a group of redcoats sitting around one of the fires.

The youths listened to the conversation of the redcoats for a few minutes, but heard nothing of interest.

Dick had just decided to withdraw and continue their journey to Camden when there suddenly came an unlooked-for interruption.

Dick and Bob were crouched at the foot of a steep incline, which ended at a point six or seven feet above their heads.

From there it was a straight drop down, and just as Dick was on the point of whispering to Bob to withdraw, there was a rattling above the youths' heads and a human form came shooting over the edge of the miniature precipice.

It was a redcoat who had climbed the steep incline, lost his footing and came rolling down, gathering momentum at every revolution.

The redcoat alighted squarely upon Dick and Bob, knocking them forward upon their faces and startling them not a little.

The redcoat, too, was startled, and he gave vent to a yell which brought his comrades at the nearby fires to their feet in an instant.

"Quick! we must get away from here, Bob!" said Dick,

in a low, excited voice. "Follow me and run for life!"

The youths had leaped to their feet, upsetting the coat as Dick spoke, and now they darted away at the top of their speed.

"Help! Murder!" yelled the redcoat who had fallen down the incline.

Naturally he was rattled and hardly knew what happened to him.

"Spies!"

"Don't let them get away!"

"Halt, there!"

"Fire, boys! Give them a volley, quick!"

Crack!

The sentinel had fired.

Crack! crack! crack! crack! crack!

The redcoats had seized their muskets and fired.

A wild yell of pain went up.

The redcoats had fired quickly and at random, and of the bullets wounded the sentinel.

Dick and Bob were not touched.

"Oh, you fools! What are you doing?" howled the injured redcoat. "What are you shooting me for?"

"All a mistake, Jack," replied one of the redcoats; "they were firing at the spies."

"Well, for goodness sake don't do it again; I'm not hurt to die yet."

"After them, fellows!" cried one of the redcoats. "We mustn't let them get away!"

A score of the redcoats struck out in pursuit of the fleeing youth.

Dick and Bob heard them coming.

They raced onward at their best speed.

The youths felt confident that they could get away from their pursuers.

It proved to be a more difficult matter than they anticipated, however.

The redcoats kept after them with unusual persistence.

It was so dark that it was impossible to make very good speed.

They were running through the timber and had to be very careful in order to keep from butting their heads out against the trees.

It was this fact which made it possible for the pursuing redcoats to keep on the trail of the youths.

There was considerable underbrush and Dick and Bob could not help making considerable noise; and by stopping and listening occasionally the redcoats were enabled to follow the fugitives unerringly.

The chase had continued a distance of a mile and

at least, and then suddenly Bob gave utterance to a cry of pain and fell to the ground. "Great guns, Dick!" he exclaimed, "I have sprained my ankle; I can't run any more. What will we do?" An exclamation of dismay escaped Dick. "Jove, Bob, I don't know!" he exclaimed. "Listen, the redcoats are close upon us. There is no mistake about it, we are in a bad fix!"

CHAPTER XXI.

THE BURNING OF THE CABIN.

It was as Dick had said. The pursuing redcoats could be heard crashing through the underbrush. Suddenly an exclamation escaped Dick. He remembered that the cabin home of "Bad Mike" Bennett and his daughter Daisy was close at hand. If they could succeed in reaching that, they might be able to hold the redcoats at bay. "There is a cabin near here, Bob," said Dick; "perhaps we can succeed in reaching it. Lean on my shoulder and help me if you can get along that way." Bob leaned on Dick's shoulder and the two made their way along at as rapid a pace as was possible. As Bob's ankle gave him great pain, it was impossible to go very fast, but they managed to reach the cabin before the redcoats could catch up with them. Dick tried the door. It was fastened. Then Dick rapped on the door. "Who's there?" called out a voice. Dick recognized it as being the voice of Daisy Bennett, and he noted that there was alarm in the tone. "It is I—the young man who was here last night," replied Dick. "I have a friend here with a sprained ankle, and the redcoats are almost upon us. Will you please let us in?" Dick heard light but hurried footsteps. The next instant Dick heard the sound of the bar being moved and then the door swung open. Dick and Bob entered the cabin as quickly as possible, and then Dick closed and barred the door. The redcoats had seen the youths, however, as was evidenced by the loud yell which went up from them as the door went shut. "They saw us, Dick!" said Bob.

"Yes, I'm afraid we're in for it," said Dick.

Dick had time for only a few words of explanation to the girl before there came a fierce thumping on the door.

"Open the door! Open it at once or we'll break it down!" cried a loud voice.

Dick made no reply.

Instead, he asked the girl, in a low tone where her father was.

"In Camden," was the reply.

Dick was glad of this, but did not say so.

He was not at all sure that "Bad Mike" was a friend, and with the enemy on the inside in addition to those on the outside of the cabin, their situation would have been much worse.

It was bad enough as it was.

The redcoats were hammering at the door and making a great uproar.

Finding that they could not break the door down, the redcoats began firing through it.

The youths returned the fire, and after the first shots they heard an exclamation of pain, followed by groans.

There was silence for a few moments and then a fierce voice cried out:

"You cursed rebel spies, you have killed one of our comrades; now, we'll either have you out of there or we'll roast you alive like rats in a trap!"

"We're sorry if we have killed one of your comrades!" called out Dick, "but you began the shooting and we only fired in self-defense. War is war, you know, and I don't think you have any right to complain if some of you get killed."

"That may be, but we are going to have revenge," was the savage reply; "we will give you just two minutes in which to open that door and come out; if you don't do it, we shall set fire to the cabin!"

Dick looked at his companions aghast.

He realized that the redcoat meant what he said.

"But there is a woman in here!" called out Dick. "Surely you would not doom her to a horrible death?"

"No," was the reply; "nor is there any need of it. Open the door and let her come out."

Dick looked inquiringly at the girl.

She shook her head.

"No," she said, in a low voice, "I'd rather remain in here with you; besides, if we were to open the door to let me out, they would leap through and kill you or make you prisoners."

"I judge you are right about that," agreed Dick, "but I can't endure the thought of you running the risk of losing your life on our account."

"Perhaps they will not dare set the cabin afire," Daisy suggested.

Dick shook his head, dubiously.

"I think they will do so," he said.

There was a silence of a few moments and then a voice called out:

"Well, is the woman coming out?"

"No," replied Dick; "and if you fellows have a spark of manhood, you will not put your threat of setting fire to the cabin into execution."

"Yes, but we will do that very thing," was the prompt reply. "I don't believe there is any woman in there, anyway; you are just saying that to try to keep us from setting fire to the cabin."

"That is false!" called out Dick. "I have told you nothing but the truth."

"All right, it doesn't matter; the woman is free to come out if she wishes, and if she does not choose to do so she will have to take the consequences."

There was silence for a few minutes, and then the voice called out:

"Time is up; we're going to set fire to the cabin!"

Dick made no reply.

He looked at his companions in a very sober manner.

"Miss Daisy, you had better leave the cabin," he said.

The girl shook her head.

"No," she replied, determinedly, "I will stay in here as long as you do."

There was a peculiar click-clicking sound outside.

The noise was made by steel striking against flint.

"They are trying to start the fire," said Dick.

"You are right, Dick," agreed Bob.

A few minutes elapsed and then a crackling sound was heard.

It was the dry wood of the cabin burning.

"The cabin is on fire!" called out the redcoat. "You had better come out."

Dick looked at his companions.

"I fear we shall have to do so presently," he said; "it will be better to take our chances outside with the redcoats than to remain in here and be burned to death."

"True," agreed Bob; "but we'll wait as long as we dare; they may put the fire out after a while."

"I don't think they'll do that, Bob; but we'll wait as long as possible, anyhow."

The crackling noise grew louder.

The fire was gaining headway rapidly.

The flames crept through between the logs and reached out into the cabin like long, slender tongues.

"The cabin is doomed!" said Dick, soberly.

"You had better come out!" called out the redcoat. "Surely you are not going to be foolish enough to remain in there!"

Dick made no reply.

He was looking all around and wondering if there was no way to escape the fate which threatened them by emerging from the cabin and surrendering to the redcoats.

The fire burned merrily.

It crackled at a great rate.

It was an old cabin, and the logs were dry.

The fire fiend was in full sway and was entirely out of the control of the redcoats.

"I guess there is no chance for us," said Dick; "we must as well go outside and surrender to the redcoats."

"If we wait much longer we are liable to get burned, anyway," said Bob. "See, the door is on fire."

Suddenly an exclamation escaped the lips of the girl.

"Why did I not think of it sooner?" she cried. "There is a way of escaping from this cabin!"

"What!" exclaimed Dick. "You don't mean a way out other than by the door here?"

"Yes, yes!" cried the girl, eagerly; "there is another way! See, here is a trap door which leads down into the cellar."

Dick and Bob uttered exclamations of surprise.

"But that won't save us," said Dick; "if we go down into the cellar the cabin will simply fall in on top of us, and we will be burned to death, after all."

"Oh, but there is a way of getting out of the cellar. A tunnel leads from it to a point directly underneath where a large hollow tree stands. The tree is only a few feet from the cellar. There are steps leading up out of the tunnel and we can hide in the tree till the redcoats go away, and then make our escape."

"Hurrah!" cried Bob, "we will be all right yet, Dick."

"The outlook is better than it was, anyway, Bob, if we can just get down into the cellar and on into the tunnel, before that door burns down, and let the redcoats see what we are doing, we will be all right. I will watch the door, Bob, while I attend to the other work."

Dick found the trap-door and lifted it.

There were no steps, the cellar being not more than five feet deep, and the youth leaped down without hesitation.

"Come," said Dick to the frightened girl, "do not be afraid; we will escape from them yet."

Then he lifted the girl down through the trap-door while Bob, pistol in hand, watched the door.

All right, come along, Bob!" cried Dick.

There was no danger of the redcoats hearing, the crack of the fire making such a noise as to effectually drown Bob's voice.

Bob limped across to the trap-door and was assisted through the opening by Dick.

Then the youth reached up, seized the trap-door and kicked it down.

It came down with a bang.

The next instant there was a terrible crash.

"The roof has fallen in!" cried Dick, in excitement. "We must get out of here quickly or we will be burned like rats in a trap, or suffocated by the smoke."

Dick had spoken truly.

They were in great danger, unless they got out from under the cabin floor very quickly.

"This way," said the girl; "the opening to the tunnel is over here."

The girl led the way, the youths following, and a few moments later they were making their way along the tunnel, which was not more than a foot and a half wide and four feet high.

The tunnel was about thirty feet long, and, reaching the steps which the girl had mentioned, the three made their way up and found themselves within the hollow trunk of a mammoth tree.

"There is a door made out of a section of the shell of the tree," explained the girl; "and as the attention of the redcoats is directed toward the cabin, we may be able to slip out and make our escape without being seen."

"We'll try it, anyway," said Dick. "Where is the door?"

"Here," replied the girl; and after fumbling around a few moments, she opened the door.

"Wait till I take a survey of the situation," said Dick.

He stepped through the opening, and keeping well within the shadow—the burning cabin threw out considerable light—peered around the tree trunk.

The redcoats were grouped in one spot and were watching the burning cabin as if fascinated.

It was evident that the redcoats thought the inmates of the cabin were doomed.

This was as it should be, and the redcoats thinking thus would make it easier for Dick and his companions to escape.

Dick made up his mind to make the attempt at once.

He stepped back through the opening and whispered to Bob and the girl:

"Come on," he said; "follow me. I think we will be able to escape."

"We'll have to go awfully slow, Dick," said Bob; "I can just hobble along, and that is all."

"We'll go slow, Bob; we will have to do so."

Dick led the way, the other two following.

The large hollow tree cast a long, wide shadow and by following this the three were enabled to get deep enough into the timber without having been seen, so that they felt safe.

Here they paused and looked back at the redcoats.

As they did so they saw a man emerge from the timber at the farther side of the clearing and come rushing toward the group of British soldiers.

"What is going on here?" the man cried. "Why have you burned my cabin? Where is my daughter?"

"It is father!" exclaimed Daisy. "Oh, I hope he won't tell the redcoats that there was a way of escaping from the cabin."

"If he does tell them," said Dick, "it is all up with you and I, Bob; for with your sprained ankle it would be impossible for you to run, and we would surely be captured."

CHAPTER XXII.

DEFEATED BUT NOT DISGRACED.

"You are right," agreed Bob.

Eagerly the three watched Daisy's father and the redcoats.

"I hardly think father will reveal the secret of the tunnel and the hollow tree," said Daisy.

They kept their eyes on the redcoats.

It was evident that "Bad Mike" was not bad enough to reveal to the redcoats the fact that there was a way of escaping from the cabin, for although he talked with the soldiers, they betrayed no signs of excitement.

Neither did "Bad Mike" seem very much excited and the redcoats must have wondered at this, for it seemed only natural that a man whose daughter had just been burned to death would show considerable emotion.

Presently, much to the relief of Dick, Bob and the girl, the redcoats took their departure.

The three waited perhaps five minutes.

Then feeling sure that the redcoats were out of sight and hearing, they left their hiding place and approached Daisy's father who stood gazing at the burning cabin.

He greeted Dick and Bob pleasantly, and seemed delighted to know that his daughter was safe.

"I knowed a'most thet yo' was safe," he said; "I knowed thet Daisy knowed erbout ther tunnel an' ther holler tree an' thet yo' would git out thet erway."

And what are we going to do now, father?" asked Daisy. "We have no home."

"I guess we'll hev ter go over ter nabor Calkins', Daisy. They'll be glad ter hev us stay with 'em till we kin git er cabin put up ergin."

"True, father; I guess that will be the best thing for us to do."

"How far is it from here?" asked Dick.

"'Bout er mile," replied "Bad Mike."

"What direction?"

"Ter ther west'rd."

"Then as our road lies in a different direction, we will say good-by."

Dick and Bob shook hands with "Bad Mike" and Daisy, and the four parted, the man and his daughter going toward the west, while Dick and Bob went toward the north.

Dick accompanied Bob till they were past Hobkirk's Hill, and then feeling sure that Bob could make his way to the patriot encampment unaided, notwithstanding his ankle was very lame, Dick turned around and headed back toward Camden.

He was determined to secure some information, if such a thing were possible.

He had met with several setbacks recently, but was not discouraged.

He walked rapidly and an hour later was in the suburbs of Camden.

He did his best to secure some information, but failed.

He penetrated into the town and took some desperate chances, to no avail.

He finally gave up in despair and slipped out of the town, and headed back toward the patriot encampment.

He passed Hobkirk's Hill, and was walking along rapidly, when he heard voices in the road in front of him.

Ever cautious and on his guard, Dick slipped in among some bushes at the side of the road.

He listened to the voices, eagerly.

The owners of the voices were coming toward him.

Presently they were near enough so that Dick could understand what was said.

"Here, walk up livelier, you lazy rebel!" Dick heard one voice say, "you are too slow altogether."

"I don't think you would want to walk any livelier if

you were in my place," replied a voice which Dick recognized as Bob's; "I have a sprained ankle."

"And serves you right!" was the reply. "About morrow, you will have a sprained neck; you will be hanged for a spy."

"I will wager that I will not be hung for a spy!" was the undaunted reply. "If it hadn't been for my sprained ankle you two fellows would never have captured me."

"You'd have run away from us, eh?"

"No, I wouldn't."

"You wouldn't?"

"No."

"What would you have done?"

"I would have given you the liveliest kind of a fight."

"Oh, you would?"

"Yes; but with my sprained ankle, I was helpless."

"Jove! I must rescue Bob," thought Dick.

He drew his pistols and cocked them.

He waited until the redcoats and their prisoners passed the point where he was concealed, and then suddenly leaped out into the road behind them.

"Come on, boys!" he yelled. "Kill the redcoats!"

Bang! bang!

He discharged both pistols.

He did not try to hit the redcoats as he was afraid that in the darkness (he could barely distinguish the form in front of him and that was all) he might hit Bob instead of his enemies.

Dick's purpose was to frighten the redcoats and cause them to flee and leave Bob behind.

He was successful.

The redcoats took to their heels and ran like good soldiers.

Doubtless they thought that they were attacked by patriots in considerable force.

Dick gave utterance to a few more yells which had the effect of still further accelerating the speed of the fleeing redcoats and then he quickly made his way to Bob's side and freed his hands.

"Jove, Dick! I'm glad you headed those fellows off," said Bob; "they'd have taken me into camp if you hadn't."

"How did it happen, Bob?" asked Dick.

Bob told him.

He had been walking along—hobbling rather, and

boats had suddenly leaped out and overpowered him before he had a chance to draw a weapon.

Everything was all right now, however, and the two led their way onward toward the patriot encampment in high spirits.

Their purpose of securing information of the intentions of the British had been defeated, but the youths themselves were by no means disgraced and when they reported their failure to General Greene, he had no words of censure to speak.

"You did the best you could, boys," he said; "and I am confident that no one living could have done better."

Next day the patriot army retired ten miles back into the country to a place called Clermont.

General Greene was as cautious as he was brave, and did not wish to run the risk of being taken by surprise and at a disadvantage.

"I will remain here till we learn something definite regarding the intentions of the British," he said to Dick; "and I shall depend upon you to secure the information for me."

"I will do it if it is possible, sir!" said Dick, determinedly.

And he meant it.

THE END.

The next number (49) of "The Liberty Boys of '76" will contain "THE LIBERTY BOYS IN TORYVILLE; OR, DICK SLATER'S FEARFUL RISK," by Harry Moore.

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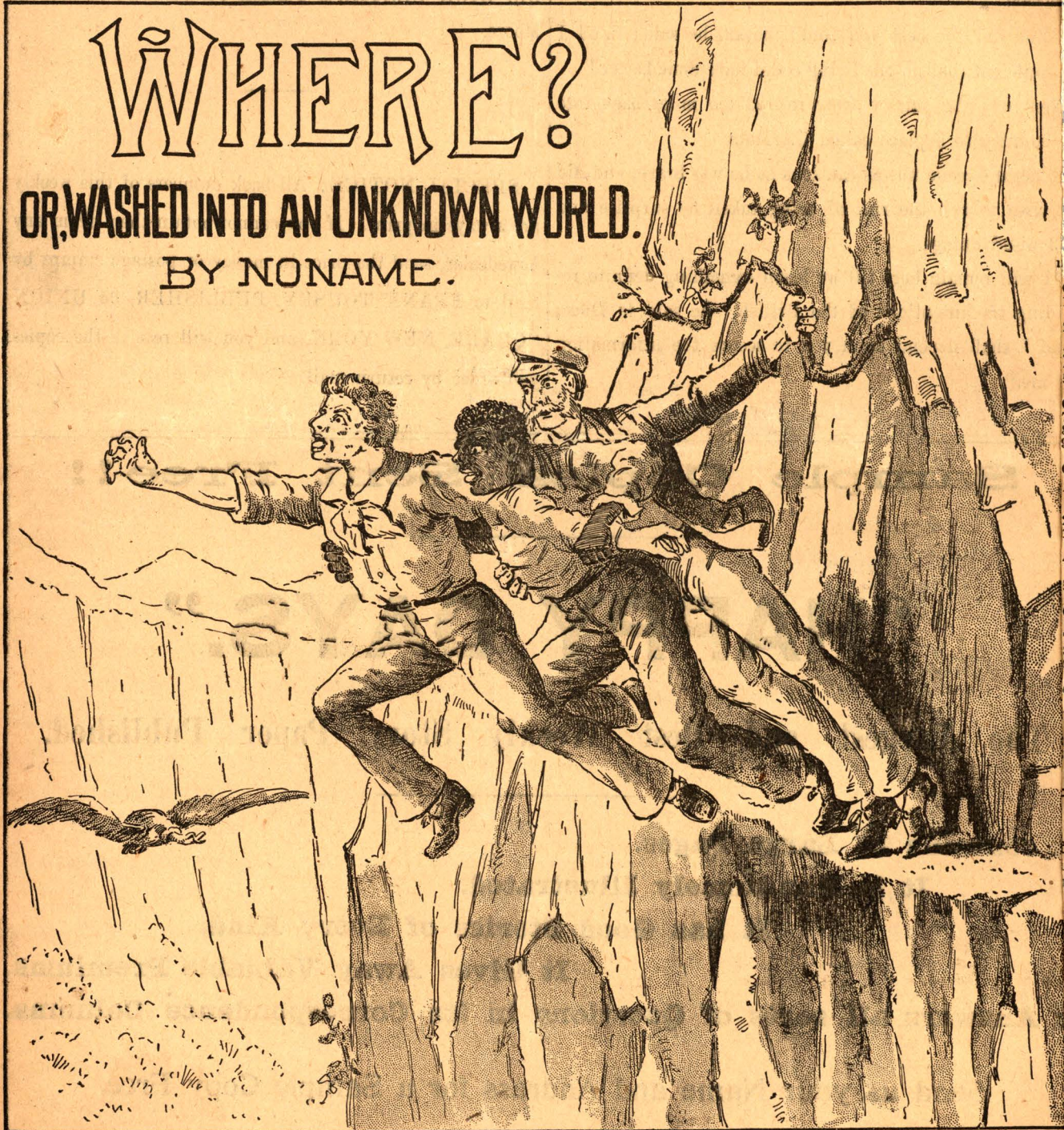
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OR, WASHED INTO AN UNKNOWN WORLD.

BY NONAME.



"Hold, madman!" I shouted. "Think of your home—your friends—of me!" "Think of the devil!" he shouted. "I saw him in the rift, back there. I did for a fact. Good-by! Let go or I'll drag you down with me into the bottomless pit!"

THE STAGE.

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